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FACTS AND FICTIONS,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF ORIENTAL CHARACTER.

BY

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FACTS AND FICTIONS,

&c.

THE MOGHULANEE.

A TALE OF THE PHANSIGARS.

In one of those large and elevated apartments peculiar to the harems of the East, the richly-carved windows, of heavy fret-work, looked forth upon a landscape lying so far below the eye, that grove, and hut, and river, the wandering herds, and the labouring cultivators, appeared rather like the varied features introduced by some skilful artist on a mimic ground, than the real and active portions of natural life, while the interior of the hall, with its grand and lofty dimensions, but total lack of adornment,

presented an idea of solitary gloom that was in good keeping with the cold and haughty character of the Moslem noble to whose palace it belonged. Rare, indeed, was either the sound of music, the voice of childhood, or the merry laugh of a mirthful slave-girl, heard in the harem of Ameean Khan, while, throughout Hindostan, his name was a source of terror to the weak, of apprehension to the timid, and of oppression to the helpless and the poor.

Still, at the time of which I write, although there was neither mirth nor music, neither the chattering of female news-mongers, the quarrelling of favourite slave-girls, the screaming of petted birds, nor evidence of any other of the thousand means of trivial entertainment that usually tend to break the monotony of woman's seclusion in the East, the harem of the prince was not wholly desolate. Retired, as if to avoid the rays that gleamed through the high lattice, and cast the shadows of its carved work upon the marble flooring, on a low cushion of dark blue velvet, embroidered with Persian sentences from the *Koran*, reclined the drooping form of a young Moslem lady, the sister of

the Khan; and at her feet crouched an aged slave, the nurse of her infancy, the sole companion of her maturer years. The lady's eyes rested on the grotesque forms thus pictured upon her prison floor, but with that fixed gaze which proved she saw them not; and when the grey-haired slave whispered a word of tenderness in her ear, a heavy sigh heaved her fair bosom, and a tear stole upon her cheek, but she seemed as if too sad for words.

Soon, however, a lengthened shadow threw its dark hues almost to her feet, and the lady, with a startled movement, raised her eyes, not animated, however, with the quick joyful glance of happy expectation, but heavy with the grief of hopeless certainty. The prince, who now entered, was unhappily little likely to be touched by such an expression, even in the eyes of his fair sister, and as he advanced towards her, noting her carelessly-arranged tresses, her cheek bearing evident marks of tears, and the air of deep and inconsolable sorrow that appeared both in her face and form, the brow of Ameean Khan grew more heavy with the reflected bitter-

ness of his feelings, and a sterner determination flashed from his dark eyes.

"How now! Shereen," he exclaimed, "still thus? Is it not enough that my will has been spoken? Have I not given you the time you sought for preparation, and yet, on the very eve of your nuptials, I find you marring your beauty with vain tears?"

For a moment, the lady's eyes were again cast upon the ground, and a shudder passed over her form, as if in the struggle to find those words that were lost in the deep misery of the moment; but she then rose, and advanced quickly, as if to cast herself upon her brother's breast.

"Oh, Ameean," she whispered, as he turned coldly from her, "call not these tears *vain*. Say that you relent at last; that you will have mercy. We are but two, brother and sister, alone in the wide world; then cast me not from you into the arms of this debauched and hated Ashraf Khan, who, as you know, is as hoary with age as his heart is seared with crime."

"Girl!" exclaimed the prince, "what words are these? by the beard of the Pro-

phet, you do well to talk of your love, as my only sister, when you thus strive to defeat and disgrace me, with a perjured oath and a blackened name."

"Nay, my brother, hear me," cried Shereen; "if, as a Moslem noble, your word is pledged that I should wed this prince, hold pure your honour, give me the kasoomba draught, and I will drain it, blessing you in death; but, Ameean, though I am a Moslem girl, give me not over to a fate far worse than that of either the cup or steel."

She paused—then winding her fair arms around the khan, raised her streaming eyes to his. But, alas! she read no mercy there; he sternly disengaged himself from her embrace, and with the accents of anger, rapidly replied:

"Cease, unhappy one, to trifle longer with my will. I have sworn that, ere this moon has waned, you shall be the bride of Ashraf Khan, the seal of our alliance. Girl, beware of a worse fate; think not, that in this aversion to the khan, this obstinate disobedience to my will, I cannot trace a degrading passion for him you once saw, when my fond indulgence suffered you to gaze from be-

hind the purdah's screen upon my councils? Beware! I would save your honour and my own."

Shereen started from her position of fond entreaty, and, stepping back, stood gazing, but with eyes no longer tearful, upon her brother's face; but the expression of her own was scarcely less marked by proud defiance.

"Ameean," she cried, "forbear! I also inherit the spirit of my father, who never bent to insult. Prince, I am a Moslem woman, holding as high as any of her race the honour and purity of her ancient family; even though I deny your right to make my peace and happiness the price of your gratified ambition, I offer my life to save your honour; but I cast back the foul aspersion you have dared to throw upon a sister's fame."

The khan gazed upon the speaker, whose dilated eye and flushing cheek seemed to agitate him more than all her previous tenderness. "Do you think," he said, "that I speak of the honour of a noble Moslem house as I should of that among the lowest of the people? that had Ameean Khan but

dreamed that his sister had been seen by the stranger, or that he had heard her voice, his sword had not long since washed out the stain? but to have once thought of one not destined to be thy husband, is degradation to a Moslem girl, and do I not know, that since that fatal hour when your eye fell upon the Brahmin Cheidamee in my council chamber, you have pined in the harem's solitude, and now, perchance, for love of this Pagan stranger, dare to weep at thy appointed fate?"

As the khan spoke, successive expressions chased each other over the brow of Shereen; but when he paused, she raised the fringed curtains of her soft dark eyes to his, whence beamed a light of pure tenderness. "Ameean," she replied, gently, "it may be as you say; but is it strange, that a girl nurtured as I have been, solitary but for the care of the faithful Heera, should feel that pure affection which is born with nature in our hearts? And is it strange, if the noble bearing of the young Brahmin seized on my imagination, doomed as I am to lone musings? Surely there is no crime in this, my brother, nor should I have shrunk from this hated union

less had I never looked from the purdah's screen. Has not nature given to the human heart affection, tenderness, and joy, and can we be insensible to their influences? Oh, my brother! the law of our hearts is stronger than those of men, and cannot be disobeyed."

"What words are these?" exclaimed the khan, with a sarcastic laugh, at feelings his harshly-toned mind could little understand. "By the Prophet, you have turned Moolah, and deal in wise sayings! but it is time that follies such as these were ended—Heera! prepare your mistress for her nuptials; braid her hair; deck it bravely with the choicest blossoms, and spare not the rosy henna nor the jetlike soormai, to remove these tear-stains from her eye-lids, for to-morrow Ashraf Khan comes hither to demand his bride." So saying, with a cold smile, Ameean Khan left the harem, while Shereen, overwhelmed with grief and terror, fell, half-fainting, into the arms of her faithful slave.

Heera gently laid her mistress upon her cushions, and retired to a distant window, where she sat with head bowed upon her knees, in deepest thought; but as the dark

shades of twilight fell upon grove, and temple, and fountain, she arose, and approaching the couch of poor Shereen, crouched beside her, gently whispering, "My child, weep not thus; but let us fly. Thy dear mother's bounty bestowed upon me a village, where I have both home and friends; a spot so secluded, that even the fierce khan, thy cruel brother, will fail to trace thee there. Fear not, my child, but haste to fly; thy bearers are all faithful, and old Yusuf shall be our guard. Alas! alas! it is all that is left thee between misery and death."

The lady's tears flowed fast, but yet she listened. Cruelty and oppression had awakened in her heart feelings, which, but for the lately denied sympathy, the sarcastic words of her haughty brother might have laid for ever dormant there; but ill-requited affection, the consciousness of a nature fitted for a better fate, the horror of her impending destiny, and gratitude to the faithful creature who was scarcely less heart-stricken than her young mistress—all tended to rouse the spirit of her race; and thus it was, that the fair Shereen, urged by the utter hopelessness of mercy at the hands of her

obdurate brother, fled, ere the morning's light stole over the distant mountain's brow, from that harem's refuge, and wended onwards, by paths little known, towards the distant home which, humble as it might be, yet promised temporary security.

About a mile from the retired village of Murnae, enveloped by dense wood, and distant a little from the high road, was a spacious dhurrum-salah, or resting-place for travellers, consisting, as usual with such edifices, of a square open court, surrounded by a rude sort of colonnade, supported by rough timbers, the whole inclosed by a high mud wall, ingress being gained by a small wooden door, hung uneasily on its hinges, which sometimes admitted travellers, and quite as often, perhaps, the lazy and petted cattle of the village. There was not much to remark in this dhurrum-salah: a sacred peepul spread its wide branches over the centre of the court, and against the wall were a few ovens of common masonry, blackened by the fires that travellers had kindled for baking their flat cakes of unleavened bread, and in one

corner might be seen a wooden charpoi, or bedstead, strung with old cords, a water vessel, and parts of a broken hubble-bubble; but otherwise it gave no sign of occupation.

Idle people of all countries love to frequent the halting-places of travellers; and it is for this reason, perhaps, as well as in the hope of receiving alms, that the most idle people of the East, fakirs, Gosaens, and Byragees, are always lounging about dhurrum-salahs; consequently, the traveller, whose experience had taught him this, would not have felt surprise at the appearance of the being who soon strolled into the common hostel of Murnae, his body smeared with wood-ashes, turmeric, and cinnabar, as his chief attire, while heavy plaits of coarse black hair served as a turban to protect his head from the excessive heat. Yet the fakir of whom I speak seemed to have some more weighty reasons than either curiosity or the love of gain in seeking the dhurrum-salah, for, having glanced carefully around him, he took from his waistbelt a small coco-nut kaliun, filled it with tobacco from a little bag that hung about his neck, and then, seating himself beneath the peepul's shade, ap-

peared to await the advent of some person or event, turning frequently with listening attention towards the little door, and then again, with a gesture of disappointment, puffing fresh clouds from the mouth-piece of his kaliun.

"They are late," said the fakir at length, rising from the ground; and, as he shook out the ashes from his kaliun and replaced it in his belt, he strolled to the little gate, and looked forth upon the landscape. It was very beautiful, for India has scenery that is not rivalled in any other of the many lovely portions of this fair earth, and even here—although there were no magnificent mountains, their base circled with trackless forests, and their towering brows lost in the hues and tints peculiar to the heated atmosphere of a tropical clime; although there were no temples hewn in the living rock by hands believed by the ignorant to have been those of the gods, so do they mock the sculptor's art of modern days; although no mighty river swept its course along, decked as a fair bride with lotus-blossoms, and rich in the graceful legends that, like the bright flowers, enamel the banks of the Ganges or Jumna; yet the

scenery had charms peculiarly its own. It was clothed with dense foliage, and intersected with blooming gardens and glowing poppy-fields, with a ripening harvest, and groves studded with the smaller fanes of India's worship, each gay with its little flag of crimson cloth, while a group of maidens were laughing gaily at the neighbouring well, and wandering cattle were moving on to slake their thirst at a glittering stream that threaded the plain like a band of silver. The fakir, however, noted little of all this, for his keen glance was rivetted on a turn in the distant road, where a rising knoll on either side appeared to close it in; and when at length a party of travellers were seen advancing from this spot, driving before them two small ponies, laden apparently with bags, a strange smile illumined the harsh features of the watcher, and, turning back, the fakir stretched himself in a remote corner of the verandah, and, drawing a chudder over his head, appeared to sleep.

Soon the usual sounds were heard that precede the arrival of travellers in the East: the mingled hum of voices in quick and animated converse, some appearing more distant

than the rest, as the most weary stopped behind, to enjoy a draught from the refreshing well, combined with the shuffling kind of noise caused by the loose heelless slippers which, usually carried in the hand during a journey, are put on as the place of rest appears in view. The travellers, about six in number, appeared from their bearing to be merchants. They were generally of middle age, active, and well dressed, but travel-stained, as if their journey had been long. Their first object was to unload the ponies, and for weary men, they did so with unusual care, placing the bags beneath the peepul-tree, where all might note their safety. Each then seated himself under the colonnade; kaliuns were drawn forth, fires kindled, and water brought to knead and bake cakes for the mid-day meal; these eaten, each traveller unpacked a small carpet from the bags, and lounged thereon, ready for either sleep or chat, as nature or inclination might decide. They were now joined by the fakir, who, until this moment, had seemed unconscious of their presence.

The party thus seated were, if one might judge from marks of caste and the triple

cord across their shoulders, all Hindoos; and the only point that seemed remarkable in their appearance was, that each wore a little purse, of curious needlework, suspended from his waist, a custom uncommon, and therefore causing attention; but all were unarmed, and apparently peaceful and defenceless. There was one, however, among the group well calculated to rivet the regard of any one who looked upon him, for to a graceful and commanding figure, such as the Hindoos give to their favourite sun-god Heri, was added a countenance of uncommon beauty, and a demeanour of princely bearing. His soft glossy hair, curled closely around his carefully-folded turban of scarlet muslin, and his well-turned mustache shaded a lip such as a sculptor might have vainly sought for his Apollo. The marked respect observed towards him by the party proved that he had influence, and the junooe across his shoulder shewed him to be a Brahmin, and of superior rank.

The fakir, having lighted his chillum, cast himself by the stranger's side, and the conversation fell into its usual channel.

"You were late to-day," observed the

fakir, gazing round upon the group; "was there business on the way?"

"You are ever zealous, Minuk," replied the stranger; "ever foremost in the career of duty. But no; our last affair was with Bearee Lall, with which you, like the rest, I fancy, are well content; to-day, we were detained by an omen which we travellers dare not brave; on leaving Tigore, a hare sprung from the brushwood, and bounded shrieking across our path, upon which we turned, and came round by Kotah, which is five miles farther."

"Ha!" exclaimed the fakir, "this is the second time; but I have warned you of this, as well as of your folly in allowing the Mahomedans to join you; when do they arrive?"

"To-morrow, certainly," returned the stranger; "for, granting all you urge, numbers are wanting now, and we must take the aid of those nearest to our hand. To-morrow they will arrive, and there can be no mistake, for Nasir here left the *pola* (sign) at the last cross-road we passed, to guide them. He has a heavy heel, good Nasir, and left a grotto in the dust it would take a week's hot winds

to fill. Moreover, as your messenger recommended speed, we strewed leaves for at least half a mile upon our way, so there can be no mistake; and now, where do you propose to meet the prince's retinue? it must be in no bye-path, but on the wide highway, as honest merchants."

"All is arranged," said Minuk; "but you must press on, the more so for the omen of to-day. You did wrong to separate your followers, for Ashraf Khan has a large party in his train, and though the bearers of the marriage-gifts travel in advance, yet, even if our friends join us in time, we are but few; and last night, a young Mahomedan lady, with an old female slave, an armed follower, and six bearers, halted here in the woods, and must be looked to; we want no spies upon our path."

"A Mahomedan lady, unattended, in the woods of Mírnae!" exclaimed a dark, harsh-featured man, who had seemed hitherto to take little heed of aught but his kaliun; "you must have taken a double portion of bhang, good Minuk, and have mistaken a nâtch-woman for a princess."

"I tell thee, Nutha," retorted the fakir,

angrily, "the woman is one of rank, and as it is probable that she has escaped from some harem, she will be followed by her family. Are you mad, thus to rush on your own destruction? Did not Jhoulee Khan, the black, lie sleepless upon the ground until the morning watch, but two nights since, from the cries of crickets, and has not the hare crossed your path to-day? Will nothing save you?"

"You say well, Minuk," replied the stranger; "Nutha listens too much to the Moslem heresies; but we will press on swifter than the rest can follow. Ere we start, however," he added, rising from his carpet, "I will see this Moslem lady, for 'tis long since I have looked on a fair face."

The Brahmin crossed the court, and disappeared by the little wicket; after which the travellers drew closer in their circle, speaking together in low whispers, and as they did so, words escaped from time to time which an ear well trained in the languages of India might yet have failed to recognize.

By the side of a glittering rivulet, which, in its murmuring course, afforded nourishing

refreshment to beautiful groups of young plantain-trees, whose long, smooth, and tenderly-coloured leaves, waving with the slightest breeze, cast their undulating shadows upon a ground richly tinted by the rays of the coming sunset, stood the fair Shereen, her veil fallen from her brow, and her cheek tinged with the new-born hopes of peace. In her brother's harem, lone and persecuted, she had seemed a victim whom grief had made her own; but in this bright garden, surrounded by flowers and sunshine, by the sweet voices of the tiny songsters piping forth their evening hymn, and by the soft free air laden with the odours borne on the sunset breeze, Shereen appeared, as nature intended she should be, a crowning grace to her most lovely works, and a personification of all that is most sweet and fair.

And now, with that dreamlike, yet most delicious feeling, which is produced by the tranquillizing influences of nature, even when we are, perhaps, least conscious of their presence, the lady lingered by the rivulet, and from time to time, an expression of pure complacence stole, like a sunbeam, over her face, an expression too gentle to be called a

smile, too thoughtful, perhaps, for a sign of joy; for there are certainly as many tints of varied tone in happiness, as there are differing shades in grief; and now, it was but a few days since Shereen had fled her childhood's home, nor had she yet gained the refuge she sought. Still, nature and freedom had brought to her young heart emotions until now unknown, and as happy thoughts love to group themselves together, there were mingling with the rest, perhaps, some gentle memory of that graceful stranger, who had, in spite of herself, led captive her girlish fancy.

At length, warned by the increasing shadows that stole around her, Shereen, raising her eyes, with a soft sigh, turned to regain the tent where Heera and her followers remained; but, as she did so, a faint exclamation of mingled surprise and fear burst from her lips, for there, even as she had seen him in her brother's palace, stood the Subahdar Cheidamee, the being so lately enshrined in her tenderest thoughts. Instinctively, Shereen sought her veil, but the delicate fabric was too hopelessly entangled with her drapery to be replaced by a hand

trembling with mingled and new emotions; and while she uselessly essayed the task, the the subahdar approached, entreating her, with a mien full of respectful courtesy, to forbear.

"Lady," he said, raising his hand in graceful salutation, "forgive me for thus intruding on your solitude, and punish me not, I beseech thee, by shading the loveliest cheek my eye has ever looked on." Drawing to her side, Cheidamee, encouraged by her now smiling lip and downcast eye, gently disengaged the veil from her trembling hand, and, with many courteous and soothing words, drew at length from the maiden the history of her flight, her hopes, her fears—of all, indeed, except her love for him; a love scarcely yet confessed even to her own pure heart. Their converse was long, and new-found sympathy to the young and unsuspecting, even from those who have no interest in their affections, touches a thousand chords to which the heart responds; and thus it was that, as a fleeting blush played on the cheek of Shereen, whilst she told him, with a voice whose tones grew every instant softer, of her dread of the marriage with the hated khan,

and when he asked her why? smiled, sighed, yet found no answer, that Cheidamee, remembering the gentle sigh that had been wafted to his ear from the purdah's screen as he stood in the council chamber of Ameean Khan—a sigh that had long since, in far different scenes, haunted his imagination—felt that the fair being beside whom he stood surely loved him.

It was a strange and sudden thought, and one which might be supposed to afford him both joy and triumph, for Cheidamee was young and handsome, and Shereen the fairest and most noble of her land; but still, from that moment, the subahdar grew silent and full of thought, and changes passed across his brow that were full of strange meaning. Now remorse would agitate every muscle of his countenance, and then the fire of enthusiasm and devotion lighted his eyes with a fitful fever, while this again gradually faded away into soft and tender admiration for the sweet girl who stood gazing upon his face, utterly, however unconscious of all but the joy of looking again upon him she loved.

At length Cheidamee spoke; but his words were cold, and fell like a knell upon the ear

of his listener. "Lady," he said, "there is danger here; lose no time, but travel on; yet on your life, go not to Ateer, for thither lies my path, the one I bid thee shun; but as you value the safety of yourself and followers, set out at dawn, and take the road of the Kaul Nissar."

"Danger!" exclaimed Shereen; "danger in these peaceful woods! Oh! it cannot be; but if there is, and you travel to Ateer, my future home, suffer your escort to join my own, and what can there be to dread?"

"Lady," returned Cheidamee, "I speak but truly. I do beseech you to be warned, and seek not to proceed by the jungle road. I dare not explain all that I know of that which threatens thee; yet, trust me, I speak but truly, and though I see thee for the last time, let me not urge my prayer in vain; but even now, summon thy attendants, and take no rest until the minar of Kaul Nissar breaks upon thy view. Lady, I must leave thee; but the influence of the hour passed in sweet converse by thy side will follow me in many distant scenes, and the wood of Murnae be to my memory, midst other thoughts, like a bright fountain upon the

desert sands." So saying, Cheidamee pressed the hand of Shereen to his lips, and hurried through the brushwood; when the poor maiden, springing with the speed of a young fawn towards the tent, cast her arms around her faithful nurse, exclaiming, as the tears gushed over her fair cheeks, "Heera! dearest Heera! I have seen him, he is here! Make ready to proceed onwards to Ateer by to-morrow's dawn. There does he live; and day by day, dear Heera, I may see his noble form, and hear the music of his voice. Ah! what do I not owe to thee, my counsellor, my friend!"

Alas! alas! for woman's love; the charm was now complete. Nurtured in a solitary harem, her young heart denied all sympathy with her kind, Shereen had grown from infancy to womanhood surrounded by severity and gloom. The hour on which her eye had fallen on the handsome Brahmin had taught her that all men were not like her haughty, dark-browed brother, and, as she thought of that noble countenance and graceful form, came fancies also of the free and happy things that were denied to her; and thus, noting nothing of the difference of

their faith (for what are crabbed tenets to young and trusting hearts?), Shereen, all unconscious that it was so, loved the stranger, and clothing him with imagined perfections, gave to them the worship of her young affections; and thus it was, that when she had again seen him, had listened to a voice not harsh and deep as the dreaded khan's, but softening into music as it breathed gentle and persuasive words to her beguiled ear, the natural independence of Shereen evinced itself in accordance with her will, and, scorning danger on the path of him she loved, the maiden resolved to go forwards to Ateer, and the aged Heera, who would have freely given her life to secure the happiness of the child of her affections, so far from opposing her inclination, rejoiced that the love of the young subahdar might, in the far solitude of her native village, afford to her young mistress some compensation for the cold pomp of a prince's harem; and perhaps even some comfort, protection, and support, when death should lay her own grey hairs beneath the spreading boughs of the sita phul.

The scene was changed, for the travellers had journeyed on, and the Hindoos, who had first arrived at Murnae, were now joined by their Moslem friends to the number of some twenty. It was late, and the party sat together in the lower room of one of the most secluded houses in the bazaar of Charsoo, a town nine coss nearer to Ateer. The room was large and gloomy, the floor formed of beaten earth, and the huge wooden rafters much eaten by white ants, and blackened by the smoke of torches. It was bare and totally unfurnished, but here and there were niches in the wall, that held little cups of red earthenware filled with oil, and serving as temporary lamps; while, to judge from the appearances around, some offering or sacrifice had lately been made by the assembled group, for in the centre of the floor was a square, marked with tumeric and lime; there was also a sheet of white linen with grains of rice upon it, and a freshly-gathered coco-nut, and by its side three flat stones were placed, like a rude altar, and on it lay a small image, a pickaxe, and a cord, with a goat without spot or blemish lately slaughtered. Nearest the altar, as its

ministering priest, stood the young Subahdar Cheidamee, who, looking round upon the dark and excited countenances of the group, lifted the pickaxe from the altar, and advanced to the centre of the apartment.

"My friends," he said, "I see the dawn approach; shall I strike?"—and all cried "Strike!" Raising then the pickaxe in his hand, the young Brahmin struck the cocoanut, dashing it into a thousand pieces, exclaiming, as he did so, "Then hail the mighty Kalee Davee! and may she accept the sacrifice to the prosperity of her slaves, the Thugs of Hindostan! Dig a pit here, my friends, with the sacred axe, and bury all from the eyes of the uninitiated, even as you bury the bodies of your victims, for this is the type of Kalee's command; and you, Nasir, bear henceforth the axe and *kassee* (image of Kalee), for you are proved, and worthy among the brethren of the cord."

"Cheidamee," replied Nasir, "you say right, and we are well proud of such a leader; ours is not such a band as that of the Nerbudda, who kill women and children, with even the classes forbidden by the goddess. I dread to join them for a day, so

sure am I that Davee will bring them to destruction. Ask any of the Moslems here, Kureem Khan, Kuleean, Rumzance, or any who have worked with them, if it be not true that they disregard omens, and dare not drop their consecrated axe into the well, sure that it will again come to the hand of him that uses it, as our father's did, because of their offences, and because the goddess already frowns on them."

"Aye," returned Minuk, "but be you also warned; and say, what mean you now to do, on the eve of an enterprise which will give to each of us a thousand or two rupees, besides gold and jewels, with this Moslem girl who still follows on our track? How say you, Cheidamee, can you not shake her off? 'Tis said," he added, with a scornful laugh, "that she follows us from love of the handsome merchant; take care she knows him not as a leader of the Thugs."

Cheidamee started, turning quickly from the speaker; but as he did so, they who had studied well the various workings of the human countenance, as the heart and head do sometimes combat one another, might have noted strange things on that of the

subahdar. The pity and the love born of nature, the ferocious purpose, the unmerciful decision, arising from habit and powerful superstition, warring each against each, all asserting for a time a sovereign power on the handsome countenance they so violently agitated; but the Moslem approver Ruzamee soon spoke, and dark indeed were his counsels.

"What," he asked, "has Cheidamee to do with all this? Leave him to greater enterprises than these. This girl follows our camp, and even now lodges in the Serai without the town. Are our plans to be marred by a silly woman, and an aged slave? The Hindoos say that Kalee forbids the murder of women, but are we to spare the cord to rush on our own destruction? I tell you, friends, this girl must meet her fate. Cannot all see that the goddess has thrown her into our hands?—therefore is she *neeumut* (doomed). Kalee Davee has twisted the *roomal* (handkerchief), and who will refuse to use it? Let Nutha go forwards and choose the spot, for the Moghulanee must die."

"Hold!" exclaimed Cheidamee; "remember that the murder of woman never yet did

aught but bring misery upon our bands. Remember the Dhosee Beebee, proceeding with her offspring to the shrine of Nizam-oodeen-Oulcea; did not three of the band hang on the tree, and were not two sent to the black waters ere the year ended? Hear me. I will warn this girl; I will prevent her following our steps farther. Is not this enough? What could you get by taking a woman who has eloped from a harem, accompanied by a slave, a follower, and six bearers? A rupee a piece, perhaps, and the knowledge that the frown of the mighty Kalee would be ever on you."

"He says well," cried the fakir; "let her go."

"Aye, let her go," repeated Ruzamee, in a tone of contempt. "Whither, pray? Does she not know that Cheidamee journeys to her village; and should her family track her, ere our business is done with the treasure-bearers of Ashraf Khan, who so ready to seek and identify the handsome Brahmin and his merchant friends as this Moslem girl?"

"No doubt, no doubt," observed Nasir; "but let Cheidamee use his influence to warn her from the consecrated cord, and, if

he fail, we shall all see that the goddess demands her victim, and waits to receive her into the celestial courts, although Minuk here will have it that we do a deed contrary to her laws."

"And he says it truly," replied the fakir, angrily: "what know your friends the Moslems of Kalee's will, compared to us Thugs of the Deccan and Hindostan? When the goddess strangled the giants, was it not to us Hindoos that she revealed her work, and gave the sacred cord, commanding us to follow her example, and to live by the plunder so acquired? And was it not to *us* that she gave the pickaxe wherewith to bury our victims? and yet these Moslems pretend to know better than we do, her laws and omens!"

"Enough, enough!" interrupted Cheidamee; "make ready to travel on ere dawn of day. Fear not; I will take means that the girl remains behind."

The Thugs all rose, but as the Brahmin left the room, Ruzamee the Moslem, with an earnest gesture, drew Minuk on one side. "He will fail," was his remark; "the girl loves him, and would follow us to his village.

Her servant told me so but yesterday, as I met him purposely at the well. Cheidamee cannot now take another road, because he has told her of his going to Ateer, and he well knows that, as a Brahmin found in company with a Moslem woman, his caste, and all most dear to him, is at stake. I tell thee she must die, but it shall be by a Moslem hand, since you Hindoos are so scrupulous about your laws; let Sotha ride beside her palanquin—he will readily pursuade her to all we want, and we will but use our means when those of the subahdar have failed."

The fakir made no reply, and Ruzamee left him; but a moment scarce elapsed after he had done so, before Minuk quitted the room, and threading the narrow ways of the now dark and silent bazaar, he reached a lowly shed, when mounting a strong and active horse that stood ready saddled there, the fakir struck across into a by and unfrequented path that led out among the gardens of the suburbs.

It was a dense wood, with here and there a pathway among the trees, which commonly

led to a rude stone image, smeared with red pigment, or simply sculptured with some hideous idol, before whom the wandering pilgrim knelt, inspired with the firm belief of finding sure protection against the beasts of prey to be feared in such wild tracts. It was, indeed, seldom that any but a devotee, braving all dangers in the height of his fanaticism, and unprotected by aught but a small bell suspended from his waist, which served, it is true, to scare the lions from his path, ventured into this wood; but now, by the side of a rude image of Ganesa, leant the fair form of Shereen, and beside her bent the Subahdar Cheidamee, in earnest and eager conversation.

The lovers, as they now appeared to be, were in fact alone, for Heera, who had dismounted from her pony, was murmuring forth her morning prayers, while the bearers, well disposed to rest, were crouched beneath the distant trees, eating betel-nut together, and handing round the hubble-bubble. It would have appeared that the speaker urged in vain, and then the first words that seemed to break the silence were those of the young Moslem lady, full of pathos and entreaty.

"Why urge me thus, Cheidamee? why urge me to turn back from the path on which you travel?"

"Because there is danger, fair one," was the reply; "danger, dark and terrible."

"Nay, nay, 'tis useless," cried the fair Shereen; "if you love me, you can care little for the difference of our creeds, and if there is really danger, am I not safer here with you and your friends the merchants, than travelling alone with old Heera, and a single follower?"

"Sweet Shereen," replied the Brahmin, "you know not what you say. You love me, and these few days, passed in gentle converse by thy side, have taught me feelings I never dreamed could steal into a heart devoted until now solely to the great goddess and her laws. But hear now the truth, Shereen, for vainly have I sought to warn thee. Turn and fly, thou and thy people, while there is yet time, and swear to me to breathe not a word to any of those whom thou has made thus far companions of thy way, lest, even now, I should vainly seek to avert thy fate; for know, hapless one, that these are no merchants that you follow, but brethren of the

cord and axe, and he who now urges thee from the death prepared for thee, is their leader!"

Shriek after shriek now burst from the lips of the terrified girl, and her servants starting to their feet, ran hurriedly towards their mistress; but in a moment more, the trampling of a horse was heard, and the fakir Minuk dashed into the centre of the group.

"The curse of Kalee is on them," he cried; "but it may be averted yet. Lift the girl to the saddle, Cheidamee, and ere to-morrow's dawn she shall be in her brother's harem; be quick, I say."

But Shereen clung to the skirt of the young Brahmin, entreating him to save her; and while he vainly sought without violence to disengage her grasp, Sotha and Ruzamee, with the Hindoo Nasir, sprang from the shelter of the idol, and flung their arms around their victim,—while the fakir, laying his powerful grasp upon Cheidamee, placed him behind him on the saddle, and galloped from the spot; but far, far, through the echoing woods, even to the ears of those who fled, rang the death-shrieks of that hapless maiden and of her faithful followers.

BOMBAY IN 1843.

CHANGING as it now is, I am anxious to portray somewhat of the general aspect of our Western Presidency in India, which, though second in rank, is in fact the most important; for steam, the great civilizer of the world, is working its influences there, and improvement, in its chamelion shapes, visits even the far shores of India. A little while, and all that forms the social and moral characteristics of Bombay may be no more; but, ere they pass, I would willingly arrest the forms of some of them.

Bombay is very near us now—a voyage of only five-and-thirty days from London Bridge; yet how few amateur travellers even indulge the notion of extending their journey as far as the glowing East! A few artists, and an antiquary or two, avail them-

selves of the *Oriental* or *Great Liverpool* to visit Cairo and ascend the Nile; but for Bombay—one would as soon think of visiting the Sandwich Islands. There is some reason in this, and (as all our thoughts are woven of a mingled yarn) a good deal of prejudice and nonsense too, which raise imaginary difficulties and strumbling-blocks both to instruction and enjoyment. Yet I cannot avoid thinking that one winter out of many, to the man of the world, the man of taste, the poet, the architect, the antiquary, and the painter, would be well spent in passing onwards from the City of the Sultan to Egypt and India.

It has ever surprised me to find so little curiosity expressed at home about the Presidency of Western India, and I have often amused myself by an attempt to guess what were people's general ideas respecting it. It is considered generally, I believe, as an odd, mercantile kind of place, inhabited by people as brown as Wedgewood's teapots, who wear garments of white calico, shave their heads, and speak a strangely crabbed and unintelligible jargon. To per-

sons acquainted with India—with its interesting inhabitants, its touching characteristics, its vast resources, its sublime and picturesque natural objects—this may appear ridiculous, but it is not the less true; and I appeal to any one not interested in Bombay, or thinking of it for the first time, whether the above notion is not, generally speaking, correct.

To persons not resident in Bombay, but who wend thither on sick certificate, or on their way to Europe, after a jungle life passed at some "out" or "*up* station," as taste may define it, Bombay at once springs into a significance strangely and preposterously in advance of its real character, which is not that of remarkable refinement, extraordinary means of entertainment or improvement, or any thing else, in short, which allows it a comparison with London, Paris, or even our county towns; for all that can be said honestly and fairly of Bombay is, that it *reminds* one of that civilization in its highest sense which induces an immediate impression of self-deficiency, while it suddenly surrounds the stranger, to whom bread and potatoes

may have long been luxuries, with all the comforts and appliances of life, as they are in harmony with an Eastern climate.

It is well known that, during the rains, the European residents usually remain in the Fort, where the houses are large and tolerably free from lizards and scorpions, the shops numerous, and the general conveniences good; but that, in winter, a general emigration takes place to the Esplanade, and with reason, for few positions can be more agreeable. The houses are of bamboo framework, covered with fine plaster and thatched in, and the ceilings are of white calico, from which are suspended lamps, green or white. The furniture is handsome, costly, and convenient; the dwelling is surrounded with flowering shrubs, and while one entrance looks over the smooth sands and the beautiful bay, the other is gay with the passing crowds—some native, some European—who press towards a military band, which enlivens the neighbouring green at sunset.

During the heat of the day, notwithstanding the breeze, screens of fragrant grass are placed against the open doors of the Esplanade bungalows, while drowsy domestics,

lately risen from their *kalian*, often drugged rather too abundantly with opium, pull the well-known punkahs—inventions usually pleasant, and I believe salubrious, for all but elderly rheumatic gentlemen with bald heads, but which have their disadvantages; as, for instance, when one is determined on some occupation—to work, to draw, to write—the hummall is told to pull the punkah; he obeys, vigorously at first, *rallentando* (as musicians say) at length, then wholly stops. The poor man has fallen asleep, and mingled heat and sympathy induce one to follow his example. Suddenly, however, the hummall awakes alarmed; the punkah is dashed violently to and fro, when papers, work, drawings, all are scattered round the room, and the originally industriously inclined gives up occupation in despair.

As a city, Bombay externally does not present many sources of recreation; still, time passes quickly—aye, and most pleasantly too—for there, as elsewhere in India, is an absence of care, a certainty of provision, and a clear sky. O'Connell may struggle for repeal in Ireland, or the people of Paris clamour against the fortifications, which they

blindly demanded,—politics disturb not the social peace of India; people dine, and neither their curry is chilled nor their champagne heated by party discussions, for the servants of Government have nothing to do with aught but loyalty and obedience, while care and personal anxiety pass away with the soup.

But how is it possible, says the reader of the morning journals, that without disquisitions on Manchester distresses and foreign policy life can go on? The question is relevant, and therefore I will describe the manner in which we usually pass a day in Bombay.

The mornings are often dewy and warm, —therefore, people seldom ride; but they saunter about with dressing-gown and book in a pleasant garden or a cool verandah, sip coffee, read their letters, and enjoy tranquillity, until the bath, followed by a rice and fish breakfast, commences the day. "Fish for breakfast?" even so; yet neither fresh herrings nor pickled salmon, but the most dainty, delicate creature that owes life to salt water, —the pomfret, newly caught, and full of fla-

vour. Then the rice, like a snow-drift; the delicious infusion from the freshly-gathered tea from neighbouring China, the bouquet of fragrant flowers, the dazzling table-cloth, the refreshing punkah, the clean, respectful servants, all tend to increase the agreeableness of the time; and, with the additions of a daily paper, and speculations on the arrival of the next steamer, few things, socially speaking, are pleasanter than a Bombay breakfast. After this, the carriage draws round, in readiness for visiting; or the palanquin, with wetted kuskos mats and luxurious cushions, is in attendance, in charge of eight good-humoured, sturdy bearers, should shopping or business require their services. At two, the well-known tiffin appears—not the heavy meal commonly described, not the coarse abuse of living, but its grace—luscious fruits, the pommellow or mangoe, the grapes of Aurungabad, creams, jellies, and confectionary. The morning visitors remain; a pleasant party is formed to ride or drive, and at seven the dinner appears, which is often a mere parade of dishes, yet there is chat and kindliness, with abundant hospi-

tality. Three hours pass, and unless a ball, a party, or some cogent reason demand otherwise, the occupations of the day are ended.

There is neither a theatre nor a concert-room in Bombay; this, perhaps, is fortunate, as late hours are destructive to health in a tropical climate. Still, much time might be agreeably passed if music, as an accomplishment, were more cultivated, for it would increase sociability, and win many from less graceful pastimes; but, unfortunately, all the machinery of the fine arts is procured with difficulty, and it is, therefore only among persons of extraordinary energy that their practice is continued. Bombay, indeed, possesses shops, and they deserve notice as a portion of its physiognomy; but the high charges and paucity of supplies, confined also to what is most commonly on demand, render them ill-calculated to give a stimulus to the arts. In proof of this, let us imagine ourselves to have entered one of the principal shops, and the scene will afford a fair sample of their contents, and will also shew how inefficient they are to gratify taste, or to satisfy the numerous wants of civilized life.

The Parsee master, attired in a white

cotton garment and pointed head-dress of glazed chintz, meets the visitor at the door, and with something more grave than a nod, yet scarcely graceful enough to be called a bow, ushers him along between a double row of glass cases; less, certainly, but of the same form, as those which English gardeners use for raising cucumbers. These are locked; but as soon as the article sought for is supposed to be seen, the Parsee produces from a large pocket in the side of his dress a small bunch of keys, when something remembered to be in fashion or invented ten years ago is laid before the purchaser. Nothing of the kind can carry disappointment farther than a Parsee shop, where, in lieu of the improvements of modern times, where the highest degree of convenience is the object desired by the manufacturer, are to be found articles only of the most cumbrous kind; the mechanism, where any exists, totally deranged, and the intrinsic value consequently lost. The poor Parsee, however, knows little of all this, and prices his various goods with amusing inconsistency, making all pay for his bad debts and damaged wares.

A very excellent chemist's shop is esta-

blished in the Fort, which disseminates the blessing of soda-water over the whole Presidency. But the most important want is that of a boot and shoemaker, notwithstanding that there are two well-meaning but very incapable persons, father and son, natives of the Celestial empire, who wander from house to house, with white coats, red slippers, straw hats, flat features, and long plaited hair, holding in their hands little bundles, containing silk and satin shoes intended to fit every body, and consequently fitting nobody. These worthy Crispins receive orders, and with bad leather, coarse linen, and paste in abundance, essay their execution, the result being, that the public pay for their want of skill, in the penalty of uneasy or distorted feet.

Two or three Portuguese have libraries in the Fort—dark, dismal places, containing a few standard and elementary works that no one ever reads, and which certainly cannot rank with either cheap or entertaining literature; but then, for reference, there is the splendid library of the Town Hall; and for purchase, the scattered volumes of a Borah's basket, purchased at the sale of an officer's

effects, or perhaps bartered by a new arrival for a packet of Windsor soap, or a new bridle for his cream-coloured tattoo. The Borah, like the reader of a circulating library, values books according to the lateness of their date of publication; he learns the title-pages by rote, and sets a store upon illustrations, quite indifferent whether they are of John Gilpin or the Book of Beauty. One itinerant vender, in particular, known as Esoo Borah, is celebrated for his collection of guns, books, and plated ware, German silver being also admissible; but it is difficult to deal with him, unless by placing the shining coin upon the table, and leaving to temptation its full weight in a form that no Asiatic can withstand.

In olden times, before steamers brought out crowds of ladies attired in Parisian fashions, and before it was considered necessary to send to England for regular supplies of tasteful attire, the Borahs, who purchased vast quantities of goods strangely thrown together in the lots of a hurried auction, arranged at the instigation of the master of a Liverpool brig, were looked to for all that was required, from a paper of pins to a ball

dress. But things have changed, and Borahs are daily becoming of less repute; their taste is questioned, their fashions laughed at, and their self-importance shaken; still, one or two retain their *entrée* to the morning room, and many beautiful women in Bombay still owe much of their attire to a "Borah's basket."

One little fat Hindoo, who lives out beyond the town, and is particular in his devotions—a fact proved by his shining visage fresh from ablution, and the newly-attached circles of bright pigment on his brow—too genial in his habits to allow of much walking, and too wealthy to render it necessary,—was accustomed almost daily to make his appearance in a bullock-garee (cart), well covered in, and containing three or four parcels of rich merchandize, which the coolies (or porters) used to bring into my room, when my fat friend, with a countenance of most solemn aspect, seated himself among them, and, with the air of a man happy in doing his duty, but not caring how long it occupied him, leisurely proceeded to untie. In one was displayed a rich pile of Cashmere shawls and Delhi scarfs; in another,

fine muslins and pretty China silks; in a third, chintzes, calicos, crapes, and woollens. Very probably you care not for any of these things: the fat Borah wipes his brow and beckons to a coo'li, whispering a word in his ear; the man disappears, but soon returns; in his hand is a small mahogany box which he hands to his master; the Borah seeks a key, it opens, and a blaze of jewels, some of great value, glitters before the eyes of the sorely-tempted; rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and diamonds, some well set, others in their native state. The wealth of the man must be enormous, but he loves his itinerant trade, and continues it from choice. Sometimes, with humbler aim and smaller capital, laces and bobbins form the stock in trade of a simple-minded Borah; but sometimes, again, the itinerant trader deals largely in pearls, bringing with him a capacious box, containing thousands, loose and undrilled, large and small together, selling them by weight; you take up a handful, and the owner looks calmly on, as if they were grains of corn.

Next appears the vender of coral, jasper, and cornelian; of ivory boxes and inlaid watch-stands; but only the newly-arrived or the

speedily-departing patronize them much. It is otherwise, however, with the general or "chow chow" Borah, as he is called, for his soap, pickles, whips, vinegar, cotton socks, eau de cologne, essence of ginger, and orange marmalade, find ready purchasers everywhere.

As I have said, the time is at hand when the trade of the Borahs will cease; they are a distinct feature in the physiognomy of Bombay, however, and as such their loss will be regretted; for though their eau de cologne is little better than spirits of wine, their calico, too often rotten, and their Scotch marmalade the production of Surat, yet the Borah is a character, and one often possessing a great fund of drollery and good-nature. This is particularly displayed at times when the Borah is required to exchange, as well as to sell goods, this arrangement being also part of his calling, and commonly conducted in a way that is replete with amusement to the looker-on. The Borah will purchase any thing, animate or inanimate—blankets, mathematical instruments, goats, or horses. Occasionally, an old pony is exchanged for a pair of pistols, or a

much-worn copy of Chaucer for a new tandem whip, when a great deal of raillery is frequently carried on between the buyer and seller, for public indulgence allows much latitude to the Borah among those to whom his character and calling afford constant amusement during the leisure hours of a hot day in India.

The horse-dealers are also among the characteristics of Bombay. In the centre nearly of the great bazaar, the stranger observes a long row of thatched buildings, surrounded by a mud wall; these are the Arab stables, and here is centered a considerable portion of the happiness of the male community. Lounging on benches outside the wall, are to be seen the dealers, chatting with their Persian friends, who are usually moonshees in the employ of European officers, or merchants in the town; the costume of the horse-dealers consists of under-garments of white cotton, over which are robes with hanging sleeves, in colour either pale blue or orange, with handsome waist-shawls and crimson slippers; their turbans are commonly of striped silk and cotton, tasselled like the handkerchiefs of the Bedouins, and

beneath these, gleam eyes radiant with the cunning which accompanies an intimate knowledge of their peculiar calling.

When a boat-load of horses arrives fresh from the Persian Gulf, nothing can exceed the excitement produced among the racing members of the Bombay Society, with that of the hunting portion of the world generally who may chance to be for the time at the presidency. The horses, from having been stowed closely together, much as the poor Africans are described to be on board a slaver, with little food, less water, and no exercise, lose all their beauty of appearance, and are commonly reduced to mere bone and muscle; the experienced eye, however, judges better of them in this state, roundness of form being quite unnecessary for shewing the real power or symmetry of a high caste Arab; therefore, as soon as the "dow" discharges its cargo, the sporting men hurry to the stables, and make an immediate selection, frequently paying three or four hundred pounds for what to an unskilled eye might seem but the diseased frame-work of a horse. After this, the Arab dealers exert all their skill to pass off at the best

prices the nags that are considered unworthy to contest the glories of either the turf or the "jungle-side," and this they effect with admirable jockeyship. Being all excellent riders (for clinging to a horse seems not a matter of acquirement, but of nature, with an Arab, like a sixth sense), a servant of the stables will fling himself on the bare back of the most vicious animal in his master's possession, perhaps, and with tangled locks, and garments wildly flowing, gallop him backwards and forwards, while the uninitiated and hoped-for purchaser wonderingly looks on, convinced that the heavy-shouldered, hatched-headed, zebra-striped brute before him must be the perfection of high caste and fine temper to be so managed with a single-rope bridle and the spur of a bare heel, and in this spirit the dealer persuades his victim to give a large sum for a horse that runs away with him the first day he mounts him, and kicks him off the second. The deluded purchaser seldom likes to acknowledge this, and the dealer, therefore, hears no more of him; the dupe of his skill hastens to barter the ill-conditioned animal with a friend, and, as "doing business," as it is called, is a great

amusement among the young men in India, the matter is soon arranged, and the original purchaser gets rid of the horse for perhaps a clever pony, a "Mackintosh," and a dozen or two of pale ale, and after all, when in experienced hands, the horse often turns out a valuable hunter, and earns great reputation.

The anecdotes that an Arab dealer amuses his favourite customers with are often admirable, while his general conduct fully proves his capacity for rightly appreciating the peculiar characters of all who frequent the stables.

Racing is not so much the fashion now as it used to be in India, and the Bombay course, although a very fine one, seems year by year to prove less attractive; and fortunate is it that such is the case, for while to men of fortune and large emoluments racing proves only an agreeable and exciting method of employing superabundant means, it is, as a species of gambling, so seductive, that few can resist its allurements, when thrown into the society of racing men, and the result is, a fearful accumulation of debt, which would be bitter ruin in any other

country, and even in India, often bows the victim down with pecuniary difficulty, and involves him in poverty and disgrace.

The sportsman ever dislikes Bombay, for beautiful as the island is, with its rocky mountain scenery and dense jungles along the coast, studded with the cave temples of an ancient superstition, it is not a country that can be ridden over, and although some species of game are to be found in abundance about the underwood of Salsette, and the back of the island itself, yet the marshy character of the ground, and its ill-reputation for malaria, cause shooting to be avoided, even by the most zealous sportsman. Bombay itself, before our occupation of it, was a mere swamp, covered with jungle, abounding with wild beasts, and studded with magnificent temples, carved, like those of Petra, in the living rock, while it was inhabited by a class of Hindoos of whom little is now known; in the present day it is well drained, and rice is abundantly grown in its low grounds; yet nature will sometimes prove herself the stronger, and so in Bombay, about the woods of Mahim, the jungles of Salsette, and even nearer still, around the very bazaar

itself, in the outskirts of the native town, the same original character exists. Heavy mists rise up at sunset from the lower grounds, engendering fever to all who may be exposed to them; and during the rains, the stranger is often kept for whole nights awake by the croaking of the bull-frogs beneath his window. In healthy situations in Bombay, Europeans appear to retain their health better than at outstations, which may, perhaps, be attributed to good water, and the refreshing influence of the sea-breeze; but it is remarked, that they soon lose the healthy look which those have been able to retain who remain at the outstations, while they have a more generally delicate and pallid appearance.

The damp, relaxing climate, and the comparatively luxurious habits of living, at the presidency, may have something to do with producing this effect, for although part of the green near the Esplanade forms a cricket-ground, and there is a good racket court at the entrance of the bazaar, few of the old residents avail themselves of such means of exercise, being content with that afforded by an easy palanquin or well-appointed carriage;

while, at an outstation, horse-exercise and hunting form the chief recreation of life, and really tend, I believe, to balance the evils of hot winds, sand-storms, and other miseries to which we are there subject.

In a general point of view, it is unfortunate that the native town of Bombay lies between the country and the Fort, between the residences of families in the environs, including Parell, the seat of the governor, and the town-hall, with the shops and houses of Europeans inside the walls, because, whenever it is desired to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the country by those in town, or those in the country wish to pay visits in the fort, the native bazaar must be passed, and persons who have ceased to note the characteristics of the people, or feel a species of antipathy towards them, as some unhappily do, find the necessity irksome, as do bad drivers, and the riders of timid horses, who may, perhaps, be the best excused, for what with the wandering devotees, with bunches of peacocks' feathers on their heads, the fluttering sarees of the women, the deafening gongs of the temples, and the variety of vehicles dashing to and fro, a scene is created

enough to overthrow the steady-mindedness of any but a steed well-accustomed to such offences against sight and hearing; while, if it be a holiday, torches whirled rapidly in the air, fireworks, Chinese coloured lamps, and combustible balls strewed along the road, render the unfortunate animal who may bear his rider through the great bazaar still less master of himself; and the most steady horses have been known, during the excitements of a festival, to spring into a copper-smith's shop, or to rear up against a passing palanquin, terrified into temporary madness by the sights and sounds around them.

Still, few things can afford more interesting or picturesque effects than the great bazaar, beginning with the gay, open Esplanade, its pretty bungalows, and animated groups, with the fort and bay in advance, and ending with the dark coco-nut woods, speckled with the handsome villas of the European gentry.

The beautiful Parsee women, with their gay green and orange-coloured sarees, chatting at the wells to the graceful, handsome sepoys, whose high caste compels them to draw water for themselves; the crowded ways, peopled with professors of almost every known creed,

and natives of almost every land; the open shops, filled with goods to suit all tastes, "corn, and wine, and oil," in their literal sense, with women's bracelets (a trade in itself), culinary utensils, and fair ivory work; the gorgeous temples, beneath whose porticos young girls weave blossoms of fresh flowers; the quaint, though barbarous paintings that deck many of the exteriors of the houses; the streets devoted to the cunning work of gold and silver; the richly-carved decorations; the variety of costumes that meet the eye, and the languages that fall upon the ear; the native procession that stops the way; the devotee, performing his unnatural penance; the harmonies of light and colour; the rich dresses; the contrasts of life and character, —such as the stately, yet half-nude Brahmin, the intoxicated English sailor, the dancing-girl, and the devotee, with the intermediate shades,—each and all, to the reflecting mind, are full of interest; and although, towards twilight, the bazaar is deeply shadowed, and the fresh breeze reaches it not; although the dust rises in clouds, the air is stagnant, and the native drivers care nothing for the right of road, pressing to either side as suits them

best, causing irritation, suspense, and danger to all whom they encounter; still the Bombay bazaar outbalances in interest all its worst annoyances, and is in its peculiarities, I believe, *unique*. As a common rule, however, people avoid it, but on the Sunday it is always crowded, as the residents of the Esplanade and Fort proceed through it to the Breach, a charming drive along the rocky coast at the back of the island; and the Parsees, who love to follow European customs, likewise go there, so that the way is crowded.

The number and variety of persons who now arrive, in monthly depositions, at the Bombay presidency, lessen most materially the interest of new arrivals. Bachelors, weary of their state, no longer hurry down to catch the first glimpse of a new belle, nor does the solitary officer, on outpost duty, pen an elaborate proposal of marriage to a lady he has never seen, lest some happier man anticipate his hopes. A ship may arrive from London, and some individual, who has a box of millinery or of saddlery on board, is charmed at the news, and by the same day's post writes to his agents about

her; but here it ends; there is no general interest felt. A Liverpool brig comes into port, and no kind husband hurries on board to secure the prettiest bonnet in the captain's cargo for his wife; nor do ladies' hearts beat more quickly at the prospect of seeing London fashions of only six months' date; all this is changed or changing; steam is exerting its influence on the whole character of India, and of its European society. There is now no longer a want of interest on literary or other subjects. English periodicals and newspapers arrive in Bombay almost damp from the press.

Such is some portion of the good which rapid communication is effecting for the European society of India, and of Bombay particularly; but the greatest and most valuable is that which we may expect it to produce on the opinions of the native population.

The Parsees, as we know, are considered the most progressive and also the most positively enlightened people among the natives of Western India, owing to their freedom from the shackles of caste, and the commercial zeal which brings them more acquainted with foreign habits and society, and

the effect is, that several of the Parsee gentlemen, Homarjee Bomanjee, Esq., Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Esq., and others, with the exception of their costume, and some strict ideas about the seclusion of their women, differ little from Europeans in the liberality of their views and their anxiety for public good.

A mistake is sometimes made in England, in identifying the Parsees with the people of India, when in fact they form a very small portion of its foreign society, and are so peculiarly disliked by both Hindoos and Mahomedans, that, instead of following the example of Parsees, the Moslems would be more disposed to fortify their barriers against innovation, because admitted by this despised class,—a fact, I think, not generally understood at home.

The Hindoos do not possess the same advantages in Bombay that are presented by the College of Calcutta, where a band of learned men support each other in holding liberal opinions, and endeavouring to promulgate them by public lectures, or the influence of the press. I have never seen a book, written by a Hindoo of Bombay, in

favour of the education of women, nor read leading articles in the native journals denouncing suttee; neither have I been invited to witness the marriage of a Brahmin with a widow; yet we have in Juggernath Sunkerset, Esq., and some other Hindoo gentlemen, proofs that their class is fully capable of becoming both learned and liberal in opinion and action.

In Great Britain, in France, in any civilized country where improvement naturally succeeds improvement, changes are so gradual, and new things so dove-tail themselves into the old, that we are not surprised into noticing them; but in India, where, from our first occupation of the country until the first steamer was despatched to Suez, there was little change, all that is now coming rapidly upon her, is full of wonder and of interest. Strange changes! where the calm Hindoo or the solemn Moslem now mounts his camel, and in the land where little was known but legends, the transcription of which occupied a life, bears through dense jungles and over desert wastes the last new work of a Dickens or a Trollope. Strange changes! when the last modes of Herbault,

the newest fashions of Parisian milliners, find their way to the noble city of the caliphs, and across the wild desert, under the guard of Arabs, even to the ancient land, in which, for thousands of years, neither manners, nor religion, nor costumes have changed! Yet stranger things than these are, I believe, at hand, for the trivial and the inconsequent herald the gradual coming of the solemn and the great—and all who know what the character even of our lesser presidency was but ten years since, and what it now is, will acknowledge the effect produced by the present rapid communication, and will allow that light is breaking, and that the clouds of ignorance that lowered on our Eastern horizon are tinged at length with the rising sun of truth and science.

RAHIMDAD, THE BRAHOOE.

A SKETCH FROM LIFE.

ONE of the most remarkable-looking mountaineers I have seen, during my constant opportunities of observation on Belooches, Brahooes, and Affghans, is Rahimdad, the Brahooe; and an incident in his life, related by himself, affords an amusing evidence of the notion my acquaintance has of private rights and moral responsibilities, and is characteristic also of the lawless habits of the mountain tribes in general.

Rahimdad, by birth a Brahooe, is by nature a wit, and by habit and education a plunderer of the most daring kind. He prides himself on being of Arab descent, and on holding lands bestowed on his ancestors as the price of blood. In accordance with the Brahooe customs, Rahimdad lives in a little black tent made of goats' hair, and

wanders about, like a careful shepherd, in the summer, among the pasture-grounds of Shawl and Moostung, while, in the winter, he strolls away from the mountain snows to the mild climate of Gundava, in the plains, to enrich his granary with plunder from the peasant's corn-fields, or amuse himself with chance intrigue. There was something in the countenance and general bearing of Rahimdad, during our interview, that delineated his character very truly; his brilliant and radiant eyes now flashed with rage, now glittered with merriment, as the topics of discourse affected him. His white close-set teeth were frequently displayed in his mirthful sallies, and an English belle might have envied the long glossy ringlets which fell over his broad and manly shoulders. His heavy dress, once white, was now of a drab colour, from long service; but in the embroideries of his many-coloured *tosh dans* (powder-flasks, pouches, &c.), it was easy to see that Rahimdad loved finery, as well as that he was an eminent favourite with the fair Brahooe damsels. He has strong passions, not always of the safest or purest kind. He loves his kaliun (Persian hookha) almost

as well as he does his fleet-footed mare of Khorasan, and his neighbours' property perhaps better than either. In addition to his skill as a soldier and plunderer, Rahimdad is a capital *raconteur*, and a very bigotted Moslem, hating all "Feringees" with the full quota of hatred enjoined by the *Koran*, and never failing, among his companions, to spit on the ground in the most orthodox way, whenever the obnoxious "tribe" are alluded to.

The excitement and insurrection, which occurred about a twelvemonth since among the tribes of Moostung, led Rahimdad to fancy that more was to be gained by joining the standard of the young Khan of Khelat, than by remaining in the plains and carrying off grain and cattle; so, one cool breezy morning, just as the bright sun was rising, and the flocks were going out to browze upon the thorny bushes, he mounted his chestnut mare, and, having previously arranged to the best effect its scarlet housings, hung a string of blue beads round its neck to keep off the evil eye, and swung his matchlock over his shoulder, he gave the animal two very determined kicks with his

bare heels, and started at a fast amble for the Gundava Pass. The stony nature of the ground, however, checked his pace as he neared the hills, so taking his kaliun from his saddle-bags, he puffed away, and lounged along quite leisurely.

Being a man of observation, even in this desert tract, the very stones gave him matter for contemplation, but it was of a nature suited to his character and position, and took the following form: "*Inshallah t'allah!* I hope it may be," muttered he, looking steadily at the precipitous scarps and jagged rocks projecting half across the narrow path, and seeming to measure with a skilful eye their several proportions; "here would be a glorious spot for Kumal Khan and his men. If they crowned these heights, and we could but get the Feringees round this way, with their camels and their treasure, and their little sepoys that I could carry in my arms, what *shikar* (sport) we would have among these dogs of infidels;" and involuntarily drawing round his matchlock, he lifted it like an experienced marksman for a moment to his eye, and dropping it again, continued: "Mihrab Khan was a good soldier, and had

he not been a great fool, the Feringees could never have got through the Bolan, even with their great chief sahib, and their crores of soldiers; ha! ha! and yet that was a good saying of the khan's—and I liked him, although he *did* blow my brother, Dil Khan, from the mouth of a gun one day—'Take care,' said the khan, 'and don't go near the Feringees, Rahimdad. They are dogs, and, *Inshallah!* when they have passed through the waters of the Bolan, they will shake themselves after the manner of dogs; but go not near them, or the sprinkling will defile thee.' Ha! ha! that was good, and so it was, when Mihrab Khan sent his slave to cut off Meer Oolah's head, to save himself the trouble of listening to some prosy story the old fool came to tell him. Ah! he was a pleasant prince!" And Rahimdad, laughing at the notion of cutting off a man's head to escape being bored by a tedious visitor, knocked the ashes out of his chillum, and replaced it in his saddle-bags.

Occupied with thoughts and reminiscences such as these, he journeyed slowly on, until his attention was attracted by a Belooche, who, well armed and mounted on a lank and

bony tattoo, was wending his way towards the opening of the Pass. Rahimdad, having first proved the priming of his matchlock, pressed the sides of his mare, overtook and swiftly passed the traveller. A few yards in advance, he wheeled round and approached the Belooche more leisurely. As he drew near, he perceived that a female, closely enveloped in a large *chudder*, or sheet, worn by Mahomedan women when abroad, was seated behind the traveller. "Ha!" thought Rahimdad, as he caught a glimpse of a pair of bright and handsome eyes, and a pretty little foot, undraped by the envious *chudder*, "what adventure is this? I must inquire into the matter."

"*Salaam aleikoum!*" was, therefore, the friendly salutation given by Rahimdad, as he reined up his mare beside the starved-looking pony of the Belooche. "Are you well, brother?" he continued, using the common compliments of the Belooches; "are you *very* well? are you quite *koosh* (comfortable)? is all right with you? is your heart rejoiced, and your mind at ease? Come, let us travel together." The Belooche would have excused himself, but he glanced at the Brahooe's

high-bred mare, and thought of the three hundred rupees that were in his saddle-bags, and being prudent as well as warlike, he immediately capped with all courteousness the salutation of his companion, and proceeded to ask just as many civil questions as he had done, all of them meaning precisely the same thing, and wasting a vast deal of time.

Rahimdad then began to cross-examine the Belooche on the matters astir in his quarter, and heard that the tribe had lately captured some hundred camels from a convoy, with some amount in money intended for the advanced army. The chat grew interesting; the particulars of the attack were all related, and it was not strange that the travellers grew friends apace, when their mutual sympathies were excited by such tales as these—tales of blood, and plunder, and revenge!

During the progress of this conversation, however, Rahimdad ceased not to cast furtive glances at the bright-eyed girl clinging to his companion; and of her beauty Rahimdad saw quite enough to feel a powerful inclination to appropriate her to himself, as well as to make himself master of the sword

and matchlock of his new acquaintance, which he saw were of rare and cunning workmanship. He was fertile in expedients, and never did he mortify a fancy. No sooner, therefore, had he determined to obtain the lady and the arms, than he ingeniously commenced his work.

"*Inshallah!* you have been prosperous, my brother," he observed, taking a long whiff at his kaliun, and handing it to the Belooche; "but this damsel, here, who is she? women should be at the corn-mills." The question did not please the Belooche, but he had already made too many disclosures to withhold this last; so Rahimdad drew from him that the girl was the bride of a rich cultivator, near Gundava, whom the Belooche was carrying off, after having plundered her family, burnt their village, and driven away their flocks; when, turning on his companion with flashing eyes and well-affected horror, "Villain!" he exclaimed, "dare you tell me this? To provide yourself with grain was right; to possess yourself of flocks is good; but to seize a Mahomedan woman, and to travel with her in the light of day—to suffer her face to be seen by the

eyes of men—this is shameless, indeed! You are little better than a Feringee, and if suffered to live, would blacken all our faces!" So saying, and before the miserable Belooche, encumbered as he was, could defend himself, Rahimdad had cut him down, and, having rifled his saddle-bags, slung his sword and matchlock across the mare, and seating the girl behind him, calmly pursued his way to Moostung.

The rebellion headed by Nusseer Khan being then at its height, Rahimdad sent the girl to Shawl, where he visited her from time to time, plundering on the way wherever the opportunity was afforded him. At length, wearying of his prize, Rahimdad began to consider what further advantage he could derive from the incident in the Pass, and his ingenuity suggested to him that he would do well to return his victim to her family, with a story of his own invention. It was necessary, in the first place, however, to work on the girl's fears by threats of the vengeance he would take did she betray him, and having bound her by oath to state that he had gallantly rescued her from her Belooche ravisher, and treated her with all honour until

a time arrived for her safe return, he sent her back to her husband, directing her to require that an annual present should be made to him of flocks, clothes, and money, as an acknowledgment of his merit and gallantry. The terms were complied with, and Rahimdad still enjoys, from the gratitude of the deceived husband, and the excited terrors of his young wife, this reward of his own most ingenious villany.

Such is the story of Rahimdad, the Brahooe, and he relates it himself with the most animated satisfaction.

THE CROCODILE MUMMY-PITS OF MAABDEH.

A PROSPEROUS "Etesian" wind carried us from Cairo to Manfaloot in six days, on our way to Thebes, passing the pyramids of Dashour and Saccara with regret, but determined to act upon a principle which should influence every wise voyager on old Nilus, namely, never for any reason whatever to lose a fair wind when he has one, for it is a changing thing, and woe unto those whom it abandons. Now, in returning, the current of the river, with the well-advised aid of "*Bucksheesh*" to the crew, will generally bring a boat down at the rate of five miles an hour, the oars being well plied during the night when the wind drops; therefore, all the objects of interest may be taken leisurely, and without fear of paying by days of monotony for a few hours' de-

tention. A Nile boatman, however, will never, if he can help it, pass boats he may see waiting at a village; there is always some excuse ready; he wants to bake bread for the crew, or the next village is full of robbers, and he is afraid to stay there during the night; or, farther on, bad men come down from the hills, and, floating across the river on goat-skins, rob the boat and go back; or there is a sand-bank, on which if the boat settles, a thousand men cannot get her off. Such are the general horrors that the reis conjures up when he sees a line of boats tied to a bank near a collection of attractive mud hovels, pigeon-cots, and date-trees, and where he and the crew long to be strolling about the bazaars, or capering about to the sound of the Arab drum.

By means of promises, remonstrances, and threats of the interference of Turkish governors, we succeeded in passing the large town of Mineyeh, with a detention of only half an hour, after which, having seen the palace of Ibrahim Pasha, been barked at by all the dogs of the town, heard a military brass band practising French marches, and seen a splendid breakfast carried in to some pasha

with three tails, whose boat was waiting there, we were delighted to set sail and fly gallantly on; but night brought us to Manfaloot, and here a whole fleet of boats, most of them crowded with pilgrims bound to Ghenneh, convinced our reis of his want of bread, and here therefore we were compelled to wait, for he had us at advantage, and while we were sleeping in our cabin, and our dragoman Youssouf was dreaming under the folds of his *barnous* or Tunis cloak, the boat had been fast tied to a stave on shore, and the reis and his crew were all in the great scene of an Arab's enjoyment. There was no help for it, therefore, and as we knew that in bread-making in the East, one must tarry the bolting, and tarry the grinding; that the grain was first to be bargained for, then the goodness or badness of the coin paid to be disputed over for an hour, after which came the processes of sifting, mixing, leavening, and baking, when a quarrel would arise as to how much had been abstracted by the sailor to whom the affair had been confidentially intrusted by the reis, and as we had to stay twelve hours in a boat, devoured by Egyptian flies, stared at by filthy Arabs, barked at by

vicious dogs, and anathematized in their sleeves as Christians by all the green-turbaned gentlemen around us, in the full bloom of their religious zeal, we began to consider how we could pass our time. On the opposite bank of the river was a low flat strip of cultivated ground, with a distant village, all inclosed by limestone hills, honeycombed with monolithic temples, the cave retreats of eremites of old, the Gnostics, probably, so finely described by Gibbon, for we were now within the grand division of the ancient Thebaid. Near this place we knew had been an ancient city famous for the worship of the crocodile, and several caverns in the mountain had been used for the preservation of their mummies; these we determined to visit, and accordingly told Youssouf to find means for transporting us to Maabdeh, the village at the base of the hills, from whence the road led over them to the mummy-caves. As at Maabdeh, at present, the only tomb-caves are to be found consecrated to their honour and remains, we were desirous to explore them.

After breakfast, therefore—and here I would warn every traveller never to depart

from his boat without this proper commencement, inasmuch as it is a sanitary process, and a wise one, seeing that Arab miles are matters of doubtful measurement, and when he sets forth, it is quite impossible to tell when he may return, and the air of Egypt, and antiquity-hunting, are extremely appetizing matters—we ordered Youssouf to procure two donkeys and send them to the opposite bank, and then with umbrellas, a large lantern and wax-candles, a phosphorus-box, and four stout sailors armed with staves, we ourselves crossed in a small boat. A dragoman, like other travellers, sometimes says more than he can quite prove, and thus it was with ours, for after the most solemn assurances that two black donkeys (he was exact as to colour) had crossed an hour before, we found that none had been even sent, and we, therefore, were obliged to sit down on a bundle of grass, and become the point of attraction to all passengers, until we had a circle round, of men, women, and children, all in huge brown goats' hair cloaks, the men spinning goats' wool, the women adorned with blue necklaces, and the features of the younger branches of the families almost in-

distinguishable, in consequence of the upper strata of flies which had coated the faces generally. I observed among this group of fellahs, as among our boatmen, that no one amongst them but had amputated the fore-finger of the right-hand, as a protection from the dreaded conscription, an act which among any other people would fill one's mind with pity for subjects compelled to such an act by the ambition of their ruler; but the idleness of an Arab is so extreme, that I believe he would divest himself of every toe and finger he had, with pleasure, if the operation would only secure to him the power of lying all day upon a bank, and basking in the sun. At Aden, he is precisely the same creature under our Government that he is in Egypt under that of the Pasha; no amount of pay will induce him to work, but he prefers grovelling in filth, and existing either by chance charity or on bad fish thrown aside by the fishermen, in preference to making the slightest exertion to improve his condition.

After waiting for an hour, a couple of donkeys were landed, and my own saddle, which fitted a horse fifteen hands high, being put

on one, whereat the poor thing looked much as a Laplander would do in the armour of John of Gaunt, we set forth to Maabdeh, distant, as Youssouf said, about half a mile. On we went pleasantly enough through fields of sugar-cane and corn, until we suddenly came on a large pool filled with mud and water. A general dismount ensued, and the boatmen carried us over comfortably enough; but mud and water ended not here; the inundations of the Nile had rendered the whole of the intermediate country a swamp, and the causeway of earth which the villagers had raised was broken down and impassable. But the crocodiles were before us; we had eaten our breakfast, and were not to be dismayed; so on we floundered for certainly three miles, here slipping along upon the tired donkeys, there immersed ancle-deep in the liberal gifts of the Nile, and then again being carried through pools, three and four feet deep, by the boatmen and Arabs, our garments and feet undergoing pleasant ablution as we went. It was an hour after noon when we reached Maabdeh, and procured fresh donkeys, smaller than the last, saddle and bridle-less. From the

back of the town we commenced our ascent along a narrow path, formed in the side of the hill, rocky and covered with rolling stones. Arriving at the summit, we wound our way at the back of perpendicular rocks of singularly grotesque forms, and came on a plain, covered with felspar glittering brightly in the sun, which, from its crystal look, delighted the Arabs, who were our guides from Maabdeh. The whole appearance of this mountain deserves remark, the face of it being honeycombed with caves, natural and artificial, while the summit was strewed with this bright felspar, and here and there boulders of flint had assumed precisely the form of cannon-balls piled by the hand of man, resembling them in colour as in shape.

Descending from this table-land, a succession of stony hills rising behind and around each other, with deep ravines, and huge rocks starting forth from their sides, presented an aspect as wild and desolate as necromancer could desire for a scene of incantation; and here to the right the guides led us to the mouth of a pit, the cemetery of the sacred crocodiles. Around the en-

trance were strewed quantities of mummy remains, large bones with portions of dry brown flesh round them, preserved by the embalming process, and fragments of cere-cloth, string, and crocodiles' skulls, left by those who had examined at their leisure the tenants of the tombs. The entrance to the mummy-pit we found to be simply a perpendicular hole, cut in the limestone hill, about fifteen feet deep, the sides irregular blocks, and without any means for descent but fissures which occur among them.

Having lighted candles, secured the phosphorus-box, in case of the lights being extinguished by bats, and removed the coverings from our heads, we, one by one, lowered ourselves down the mouth of the pit, and perceived an opening in the rocks leading from the left. This gallery, originally high enough. no doubt, for people to traverse with convenience, was so choked up by sand, which had drifted down from the mouth of the pit, and by the falling of blocks of stone from above, that it seemed almost impassable; but the Arabs urged us on, and with one before us, followed by Youssouf, both bearing candles, ourselves next, and two

more guides bringing up the rear, also with lights, we all on hands and knees commenced our investigations. It would never do to confess to feeling nervous in such a situation, and yet it was far from pleasant to find ourselves gradually losing the glimmering of daylight which streamed down the aperture of the rock, with intense darkness and an unknown road before us, and our way perpetually blocked by stones, whose angularity was sufficiently evident as we crawled over them; but it was possible still to advance, and as the passage seemed clear of bats, we had, as explorers of a mummy-pit, nothing reasonably to complain of. Soon, however, the guides motioned us to lie flat, as the roof was lower, and the blocks of stone sharp above us; so thus, serpent-wise, with our faces close to the ground, we drew and worked ourselves round windings in the gallery and along shifting sand and stones, in a close, hot atmosphere, unvisited by the light of day, until we found ourselves in a chamber some fifteen feet high. The whole of the mummies, whatever they might have been, were removed from here, but the rocky floor was covered with fragments of

human and other bones, some completely pulverized. The size of this chamber probably, in its greatest extent, is forty feet, and wholly stalactitical, but blackened with the oil and smoke of torches, and to the right-hand lies an enormous block of stone, a portion evidently of the roof. Opposite to the opening leading to the first gallery, we found another; and our zeal a little increased by having seen this large chamber, we again adopted our crawling position, and found a gallery to which the sand of the mountain had not penetrated, it is true, but which was more difficult to traverse than the first, in consequence of the huge blocks which had fallen from the roof, and in large masses obstructed the way. The heat here, too, was considerably greater, and the impurity of the atmosphere sensibly felt, producing headache and oppression of the chest; the candles (for we had no torches) gave but a dim uncertain light, and we were a long way from our point of entrance, while fresh in our memory was the story of Mr. Legh's Arab guides, who, as they preceded him in these galleries, fell dead from the effects of mephitic vapours.

None of these circumstances were very encouraging, and working along for a hundred yards on hands and knees is rather a tiring method of advancing, particularly with a road rugged and winding as this was. But still the crocodiles had not been seen; the end had not been accomplished; retreat, therefore, was impossible, and on went the party, until the end of the gallery appeared completely blocked up by a huge stone or ledge across it. On near approach, however, the difficulty vanished, and an aperture appeared sufficiently large for the entrance of each person singly, and in a horizontal position; but here bats in millions came rushing forth, shricking like prisoned demons, and striking in blind terror against every thing in their way. Fortunately, our people had brought the lantern, or the whole party, unprepared for this, and unable to trace the windings of the galleries in darkness and alarm, might have been inclosed for ever in this fearful place, and become subjects of curiosity and wonder to the antiquaries of future times.

Our more provident party still pressed on, dismayed but for a moment by the scared and hateful birds, who, with a loud rushing

noise, were hurrying from us to the outer chamber. This third gallery led to a spacious apartment, similar to that we had left, and like it, empty, with an opening to the right and left. The guide paused for a moment, and took that to the left, which led to another gallery, as close and narrow as the rest, the same, as we conjectured, from which Mr. Legh and his party were constrained to turn, and where his Arabs perished. Soon, the dragoman, who was in advance of the party, stopped; something impeded his progress; and, on inquiry, we found it to be a human body, not in a mummied state, but the skin quite dry, and resembling rather wood than a thing which had once possessed life and animation. A few steps further, a second body lay similarly across the gallery, and this Youssouf also moved aside before the party could advance, leaving the conviction that both were, in fact, the bodies of the poor Arabs, whose fate Mr. Legh thus describes:—"We felt we had gone too far, and yet were almost deprived of the power of returning. At this moment, the torch of the first Arab went out; I was close to him, and saw him fall on his side; he uttered a

groan: his legs were strongly convulsed, and I heard a rattling noise in his throat—he was dead. The Arab behind me, seeing the torch of his companion extinguished, and conceiving he had stumbled, passed me, advanced to his assistance, and stooped: I observed him appear faint, totter, and fall in a moment—he also was dead. The third Arab came forward, and made an effort to approach the bodies, but stopped short. We looked at each other in silent horror; the danger increased every instant; our torches burnt faintly; our breathing became more difficult; our knees tottered under us, and we felt our strength was nearly gone."

Mr. Legh and his companions escaped from this gallery to be hunted for murder by the Arabs of Maabdeh and Manfaloot, and as narrowly avoided that fate as they did the mephitic vapour of the pit; yet had they not reached the chamber of crocodiles, nor seen a mummy. Our people, however, no way daunted by the dead bodies, now removed from the path, crept on; and at length all were rewarded by entering a chamber, as large as the two first, but not more than six feet high, in consequence of the floor being

filled up to a considerable depth by stones and rubbish. Here, then, were the long-sought mummies. On every side bodies piled on bodies lay, enveloped in mats, coffinless, but apparently undisturbed from the time of burial. Youssouf unrolling two or three, cere-cloths were found beneath the mats, and bundles of small mummied crocodiles bound up with the bodies, some on either side, and others on the chest, in the place where the scarabæi are commonly placed. The size of these crocodiles was singularly small, but the contrast in size between the creature when very young and when full-grown is one of its peculiar characteristics, the egg it lays not being larger than that of a goose. The crocodiles we found were perfectly preserved, even to the teeth and feet; but still, no one's satisfaction was complete until, in a small chamber opening from the large one, was discovered a huge full-grown crocodile, perfectly preserved, the *genius loci*. The aperture in front of the chamber was now much less than the body of the crocodile, so that he was safe from the chance of being dragged from his honourable retreat, by common means at least. But all was gained,

and on hands and knees the whole party commenced their backward course, full of triumph, and yet not sorry to leave doubt and apprehension, bats and darkness, mummies and dead Arabs, all behind; and pleasant indeed at the end of the serpentine windings was it to catch a glimpse of sunshine, to feel a breath of pure air, and at length to emerge from his loathsome pit, and stand erect, safe from the mephitic vapours and atmosphere of death.

The guides assured us that, in the catacomb we had just risen from, there were in all five large chambers, with other pits farther in the hills, and, from the appearance that there was of caverns leading from the chambers and galleries, filled as they were with stones and rubbish, it is probable that, like many other burying-places I have seen in Upper Egypt, the mountain was one great necropolis, in the immediate neighbourhood of a large city, and that underground galleries communicated with numerous other tombs and chambers which doubtless honeycomb the hill. From the circumstance of the bodies being uncoffined, they must have been of the poorer class, the large crocodile

being the presiding guardian of the dead, and the smaller ones considered as protectors of the bodies to which they are bound. It is most probable that, if sought for, tombs of the rich, with hieroglyphics and paintings, might also be found among these hills, with sculptured figures of Savak, the crocodile-headed deity himself. From the condition of the walls and ceilings, the pit must have been constantly used by torch-light; and the first chambers, as the most easy of access, have been rifled by the Arabs, and, perhaps, cleared purposely for shelter, as it seems to have been the custom of the people of Maabdeh, when pursued, to retreat to these pits for security; and as some Greek soldiers, on one occasion, saw many suddenly disappear as if into the earth, and followed them into this pit, and even to the first chamber, but saw no one, it is probable that they were acquainted with galleries leading to some other points of egress on the mountains.

Tombs hewn in the mountains, whenever the position of towns allowed of this mode of burial, were evidently preferred by the ancient Egyptians to any other, for they were a people who went down to the pit,

like those described by the prophet Ezekiel. Except in the neighbourhood of Thebes, where in the tombs of the kings are seen granite sarcophagi, the burial-chambers of the wealthy had always a pit at the end of the galleries or rooms, in which the coffins were deposited, and the aperture afterwards closed —a fact the traveller would do well to remember, as in several cases we were on the verge of these dark abysses, quite unsuspecting their existence, and were only saved from sharing the burial-places of the ancient Egyptians by shrinking back from the clouds of bats who, scared by the approach of lights, rushed up from their retreats around its sides.

The desecration of the resting-places of the dead is one of the most horrible sights in Egypt, and although the bodies and skulls which strew the exterior of the tombs, dragged forth by the avarice of the Arabs, are but masses of bone and bitumen, yet do they so perfectly retain their original forms, that one cannot be otherwise than shocked at the outrages perpetrated on them; and as a ragged Arab holds up a female head, with the clustering tresses yet unchanged, and de-

mands for it a piastre,* as an "antique," one shudders at the thought of what the feelings of those would be, who fondly hoped to preserve for ever the object of their family love, could they thus see it torn from its body, and bartered for by strangers! "See," said a fellow to us at Thebes, with a broad grin, presenting at the same time a mummied head, whose fine outline, beautifully-turned ear, and soft bright hair, were all unchanged in character of form as they were two thousand years ago, "see, here is the head of a signora, *cheap*." We turned with horror and disgust from this trafficker in the dead, but we found it to be a common trade wherever tombs or catacombs were to be rifled.

Before sunset we descended from the necropolis, and by a shorter road, leading to the green margin of a small branch of the river. Our dragoman, himself tired with the morning's labour, had sent round for the small boat to wait us here, and paying the guides a piastre or two more than they were entitled to, which made them all clamour loudly for "*backsheesh*" (as the more you give an Arab the more greedy he be-

* About twopence-halfpenny.

comes), we, and the crocodile mummies, were safely got on board, and after three hours' tracking, pushing, and rowing, on the part of the crew, who paused every ten minutes to tell us in eastern phrase they were hungry and wanted to "eat bread"—a feeling we heartily sympathized in, notwithstanding the breakfast—all at length arrived on board our craft at Manfaloot, somewhat wearied with our day's excursion to the burial-place of the crocodiles, and not sorry to forget for awhile the dead, in our immediate cares for the preservation of the living.

THE BRAHMIN'S DAUGHTER; OR THE FEAST OF THE TEN NIGHTS.*

BENEATH rich groups of sacred banian and peepul trees, whose broad and glossy foliage cast its flickering shadows over the curiously-carved ornaments of an antique temple, reclined a beautiful Brahmin girl, her gold-embroidered saree falling from her shoulders, and her dark soft eyes fixed on the waters of a calm, deep lake, which reflected alike her own loveliness, and the grotesque but picturesque objects by which she was surrounded. She was at that age when the beauty of a Hindoo woman, still retaining the sweet expression of childish simplicity,

* The facts on which the following tale has been framed were communicated to me by a very intelligent Deckannee Brahmin; they describe the rites that were unhappily common among the sect of Kurradee Brahmins, at Poonah, whose sacrifices were abolished during the government of the Peishwa.

is peculiarly charming from its extreme delicacy of feature, and yet the fair oval face bore on it that tender thoughtfulness which proved, far more than did the delicate drapery and sparkling gems which adorned her slender form, that the fair Brahminee ranked among the noblest in her land, and boasted its purest blood; while, by the lady's side, bent a tall and reverend form, whose pale but finely-chiselled features, combined with peculiar stateliness of manner, told of a life passed free from the exciting influences of sense, and of a mind devoted to abstract speculations on the mysteries of a religion full of deep interest to those who looked beyond its forms, and drew their high meaning from beneath its symbols. Such was the Brahmin Rugonath, the high priest of the Kurradees, a sect whose cruel rites had so placed them under the ban of the Peishwa's government, that their hall of mystery was interdicted to all but the initiated among the priesthood; yet he who looked upon the high, calm brow of their great leader, must have felt that, false, bigoted, and cruel as was his creed, it would have been difficult to entertain aught but reverence for that refine-

ment, which, both in form and lineament, seemed the result at once of abstinence and of high exciting thought.

"My child," said Rugonath, continuing in slow melodious accents the conversation he had commenced with the fair being reclining at his feet, "you ask me why I am so sad of late, so anxious; alas! Sirdaee, I am thus, for a reason as terrible to you as it is to me, and as fraught with fearful circumstance. Well do you know that, on the feast of the Ten Nights, the black goddess demands a victim, whose blood, flowing around the altar, shall expiate the sins of all her worshippers through the medium of her highest priesthood, and from youth to age, Sirdaee, have I, the chief of all the Brahmins in this land, stood beside that altar. But now, a few months more, and the feast of Kali will commence, and as yet a victim is not found fitted for the sacrifice; therefore is my spirit darkened, and gloom and terror surround me."

"But, my father," asked the fair Sirdaee, raising her full dark eyes, and fixing them anxiously on the Brahmin's face, "must it really be, that the great Kali demands a

human sacrifice? The sins of the people are not heavy, and is it not terrible that the life of the free, the youthful, the beautiful, should be quenched in sacrifice to this dark and fear-inspiring goddess? Were it, indeed, a stranger—but no; it is required that we offer up those whose affections by friendly intercourse are entwined around our hearts, and who are willing to become oblations. Alas! my father, to the young—the loved—is not death as terrible as even the great Kali herself?"

"Sirdaee," replied the priest, "your youth and sex forbid that you should penetrate into mysteries such as those which wait upon the black goddess and her altars; seeing only its external symbols, you can know nothing of the yearning desire for immortality that elevates and excites a mind devoted to the abstruse studies of our religion; you can know nothing, my child, of the ecstasy that seizes on the brain and heart of a victim approved by the goddess, nor could you with mortal eye see, as does the high priest of her mysteries, that, at the moment in which the knife descends, and the tide of life gushes forth, the beatified spirit is enthroned in the

courts of Indra, seated on a golden throne, and tended by the assembled gods. The struggles of the body, indicating pain and death, are seen only to those whom the goddess owns not; the learned and blessed sacrifice that she accepts feels none of this, but, translated to a celestial palace, already revels in bliss unspeakable. Evil has passed away from him and from those he loves; his brethren will become princes on the earth, and he, beside the shield of Doorga, will share her triumphs for evermore."

As he spoke, the eye of the Brahmin kindled with strong excitement; he raised his stately form to its fullest height, and elevated his hand, as if in invocation to the goddess, while Sirdaee, gentle and tender as she was, caught a portion of the excitement of her father. Rising from the ground, she gathered a cluster of young leaves from the sacred trees, to lay them on the altar of the temple, and as the lovely girl, with humble obeisance, bent her forehead to the earth before the hideous image of the sanguinary goddess, she trembled with the superstitions of her people, and felt in their full force all the terrors which such a creed produces on

an imaginative and excitable nature. Aroused from meditation, the Brahmin turned and gazed upon his child, commending her in his heart to the goddess before whom she stood; and then, folding her in his arms, and pressing his lips upon her brow, turned slowly from the spot.

Alone, by the still water and the shading foliage, Sirdaee pondered on her father's words, and of all she had known and heard of the oblation commanded by the goddess Doorga in her form of Kali, and as she remembered that neither a woman nor a priest, neither the weak, the aged, nor the diseased, can be accepted, she again trembled, as she thought of the dire necessity of preparing for the Feast of Nights! But as she pondered, sweeter fancies stole into her young mind, and a soft smile played around her lips. She thought of the young stranger Brahmin, who, but a few months before, had craved rest and refreshment at her father's house, and who, lingering there, from the love he felt for the fair daughter of his host, had sought and won her, and was now her affianced husband; and as the pure affections of nature suppressed her terrors of the black

goddess, the girl played with the bright flowers around her feet, watched the dancing shadows on the sunny ground, and felt that mercy, beauty, and truth were everywhere around her.

A brief period, and the fair Sirdaee started from her reverie, and a brighter smile illuminated her sweet face, for there, reflected in the fount on which her gaze had fixed, was the image of him she loved, the young Heerappa, his noble countenance beaming with a smile as bright and joyful as her own.

"Sweetest Sirdaee," whispered her lover, casting his arm fondly around her, "I come to tell you of my happiness; your wise and noble father has consented to our union, Sedasheo greets me as his brother, and your kind mother anxiously awaits us, to give a blessing to her children! Come, love! sweet as this spot is to thought, I must win you from it, to share the brighter promises of the assured future;" and as Heerappa fondly drew Sirdaee towards the altar of the goddess, and that beautiful pair besought the protection of the terrible Kali under her gentlest form, of the Mother of Love; then,

clasped hand in hand, they lingered yet lost in such fair day-dreams as none but the young, the loving, and the pure can know.

The city of the Peishwa was full of mirth and gaiety; crowds assembled in the streets, flowers strewed the way, groups of young men, bent on merry mischief, gathered in the bazaars, and, from time to time, richly-dressed servants passed along, bearing on massive salvers the presents destined for those wealthy guests who were bidden to the marriage of the beautiful daughter of Rugonath and the handsome Heerappa, their stranger guest, from the bright shores of the Carnatic. On the part of the bride, were sent grains of rice, wrapped in fresh leaves of the sacred tulsi, and on that of the bridegroom, saffron scattered with shreds of gold; and there were jewels, and rich brocades, garlands of bright flowers, the jasmine and the chumpa, with the red-cheeked pomegranate and the luscious grape of Aurungabad; while fire-works, feasting, and hilarity diverted the crowd on every side. The elder men chatted together of the wisdom and dignity of the

father; the younger, of the reported grace and loveliness of the daughter, whose form was said to be like the young plantain tree, her eyes like the full leaf of the lotus, and her rosy lips resembling the new buds of the fresh mangoe blossom.

In the harem of her father, the beautiful Sirdaee reclined; a garland of fresh blossoms hung on her rounded arm, and her soft robe of snow-like muslin fell in graceful drapery around her slender form, while her cheek was delicately tinted with the hue of joy, and bright tears stood upon the dark fringe of her soft eyelids. Her mother, Bheema, was occupied with her maidens in preparing the balls of rice called *shrēē*, with which, as emblems of prosperity, they touched the brow of the bride and bridegroom, as well as the sweetmeats intended for the marriage-feast, and thus for a time scarcely noticed the abstraction of her fair daughter; but at length she glanced towards her, and, surprised at the appearance of tears in a moment of unmixed joy, gently placed her hand upon her daughter's arm, and anxiously inquired, "Sirdaee, my child, why dost thou weep? surely all now is hope and happiness!

What fearest thou? the wane of thy husband's love? the influence of other wives? or the parting from thy father's house? Speak, that I may comfort thee." Sirdaee arose, and with a smile struggling against the falling tears, threw herself into her mother's arms.

"I weep not for grief, my mother," was her reply, in the softest accents; "but my heart feels burthened with its own excess of joy. I ponder on my rare and happy fate, in having been thus by my indulgent father suffered to choose as my husband him whom my soul adores, and as I am lost in admiration of his noble qualities, I pray the gods that I may be to my young lord, Heerappa, all that Seeta was to Rama; faithful as his shadow, sharing his joys and his sorrows, adoring him in life, and dying upon his grave:" and the fair girl bent her brow upon her mother's bosom, and tears of pure and holy love calmed her excited feelings.

An hour before midnight had been declared an auspicious epoch for the marriage, and a moment before, the great gong from the mountain temple of Parvati boomed forth its wild music, reverberating through

the neighbouring forests, and arousing even the beasts of prey in their tangled lairs, when Heerappa issued from his house, splendidly attired in fine embroidered silk, and jewels of great splendour, arranged as bangles, anklets, rings, and necklaces, glittering beneath the torchlight. Entering his palanquin, the frame-work of which was of elaborately-carved work, richly gilt, four attendants stood beside him, waving fans of the finest texture, and at his command, the procession moved on, preceded by carriages bearing dancing-girls and singers, decorated with many-coloured flags, and surrounded by the most brilliant assemblage, the larger number mounted on camels and elephants, with richly-caparisoned horses, bearing some musicians, and others beautiful children, waving boughs of the sacred trees.

Not far from the house that contained the object of Heerappa's love, the Brahmin Rugonath, bearing a sprig of cusa grass, attired in his priestly robes, in full state, advanced to meet the marriage procession. Loud was then the crash of instruments, the roar of cannon, and the cheering of the people, yet no smile lighted the calm face of the Brah-

min father as he greeted, in set form and with cold but courteous words, the bridegroom of his child; but those who watched him keenly imagined they perceived a slight shudder pass over his frame as the young Sedasheo, pressing through the crowd, flung himself on the neck of the beloved Heerappa.

"My brother!" exclaimed Sedasheo, "come! press swiftly through the gazing crowd; Sirdaee sits with beating heart awaiting you, and long have the sepoy guard, stationed to prevent the intrusion of the uninvited to the marriage-door, cried out, 'Behold, behold, the bridegroom comes!' Delay no longer; my sister's heart is fainting with this hour."

"But see," replied Heerappa, pressing the hand that sought to urge him forward, "see how dark sits the shadow upon your father's brow; surely this, Sedasheo, is not a bridal welcome, and it portends, I fear, some evil."

"My father," said the youth, "has been more grave and sad of late than is his wont; but it will pass—heed it not; he loves too well, Heerappa, and my sister's smiles will atone for more than my father's present coldness." Thus the friends pressed on, until beneath a splendid cloth of rich embroidery,

stretched across the verandah of the house, the bridegroom stepped on the rich dais which, covered with baskets of rare flowers, led to the guarded door of the inner chambers, that opened only for the marriage guests. But the Brahmin Rugonath still lingered, and there were those who, watching his steps, saw that he turned towards the temple of the black goddess, and before its altar the priest bent low in prayer until the last of the festive group had passed, and then, standing erect before the goddess, with a countenance betraying deep emotion, the following words burst from his lips:—

"Terrible Kali! thy priest has sworn it; by thy club, thy spear, and thy trident, thou shalt have a fitting sacrifice, and at my hand shalt thou require it."

The Brahmin raised his arms and stretched them forth towards the goddess; to his eye, a ghastly smile played upon her hideous countenance; her dishevelled hair seemed twining into snake-like form, and her right-hand to grasp more firmly the broad sword of slaughter, beneath which the offending giants fell; and, as Rugonath believed that his oath was thus accepted, fiery gleams of

strong excitement illumined his eyes and changed the whole expression of his countenance: leaning against the altar, hours passed away while the mind of Doorga's priest, heedless of the present, lost itself in abstract speculations on the mysteries of the superhuman.

Near the fount where Heerappa had first claimed the Brahmin's daughter, Sirdaee now stood beside the husband she adored Heerappa, educated for the happiness that springs from studies of the purest kind, felt that, in the gentle thoughts of his fair wife, the better portions of his spirit were but reflected with a deeper value, while she was sensible that, added to all the joy that innocence and purity had taught her to extract from nature, love and joy, was now the deep happiness of knowing herself dearer than life itself to the husband of her choice.

"I know not why, Heerappa," at length said the fair Sirdaee, raising her eyes to her husband's face, "but joy seems to have stolen from me all the sterner part of that religion which my father so earnestly

has taught me. This dreadful oblation to the fearful Kali presses upon my heart, and even though my creed teaches me I should rejoice at the glorious translation of the victim from the pains of earth to the wondrous joys of the celestial courts; yet how terrible is it to die, and leave this fair world, this sun, these flowers, these murmuring waters, and all the fond hearts who love us! Tell me, dear love, must all this be?"

"Sweetest," was the reply, "the goddess demands the oblation, and it must be made; but remember, that he whose blood is shed at her altar by the priests of Doorga is a willing sacrifice, or would not be accepted by the goddess; and he who is educated in her mysteries, and regards himself as the expiation, finds in her service raptures even greater than we can do in love, and in their delirium of ecstasy is found a joy which has no semblance in aught of worldly happiness."

"Know you who is to be the sacrifice?" inquired Sirdaee, after a brief pause, and laying her trembling hand upon her husband's arm.

"I know not yet of any," was the reply; "with thy father rests the secret. But

come, think not of dark and fearful images; the goddess has blest us, my own Sirdaee, with her choicest blessings; let us, then, lay fresh blossoms on her altar, and think of her only in her gentlest form."

The great feast of the Ten Nights had commenced, and gaiety and pleasure reigned throughout the city. The sacred water-jars were placed within the temples; perfumes, rich attire, sweetmeats, and the rarest flowers were presented to the families of the priests; and while the goddess herself was said to be adorning her hideous form, previous to her incarnation in the form of Kali, the daughters of the land neglected no means to increase their charms, using unguents, cosmetics, and various dyes in profusion.

The still fair wife of the Brahmin Rugonath sat in the inner apartment of their house, surrounded by all the materials common among Hindoo women for the improvement of female beauty; bowls of fresh steeped henna, brushes tipped with antimony, flasks of sandal-oil, and small bags of betel-

nuts, covered the carpet on which she sat; and while she directed her handmaids in their preparation, the Lady Bheema smoked, from time to time, a small kaliun, its mouth-piece studded with the rarest gems.

"Nathee!" exclaimed the lady, suddenly, "you are strangely careless; how think you that my daughter's teeth will remain like the seeds of the pomegranate, if you seek not the due pounding of the betel? And you, Seeta, how will the fingers of your mistress resemble the petals of the chumpa blossom, if you neglect to use the sweet limes in extracting the colour from the flowers of the mendee? one would think you had never made henna for other than a Soodra's wife." And as the lady's voice was pitched in its highest key, it is likely the good Bheema might long have continued to chide, often a favourite pastime of a Hindoo lady, had not her eyes suddenly encountered the prince-like Rugonath, who, with a brow heavy with thought, slowly approached from an inner apartment. The attendants hurriedly withdrew, and Bheema, rising from her seat, lifted her joined hands towards her forehead, and exclaiming, "Oh, my lord, the

fame of your wisdom is over the whole world, and your goodness illumines all under your roof," stood submissively before him.

"Bheema," said the stately Rugonath, fixing his dark gaze on the changing countenance of his wife, "give me your best attention, for I require such aid as you alone can give."

It was rare that the Lady Bheema dared to reply to an injunction of the stately Rugonath, and certainly never when oppressed by such a mood; silently, therefore, she bent before him, and the Brahmin slowly continued:

"The feast of the Ten Nights draws to a close, and on the tenth Kali demands her sacrifice. You know that, when doubting from whence should come the oblation, the goddess herself, deigning to assist her priest, sent hither the stranger Brahmin, young Heerappa, who, oppressed with travel, sought rest and shelter at my hands. Him I anxiously instructed in the mysteries of the goddess, with the earnest trust that, inflamed with zeal, he would seek to become the sacrifice required: but no! he loved Sirdaee, and in his apostacy, has scattered the jewels I

offered him in the jungles of the world, and, tying a knot in the corner of his garment, has left out the gold; yet I have vainly sought one so fitting as my pupil, and, therefore, the stranger still must die."

"Alas! alas!" shrieked the terrified wife, "my child, my poor Sirdaee! Surely you will not slay your own, your fair and gentle daughter; think you she will for an hour survive her husband's death? Oh, my lord, have mercy! I do beseech you, spare Heerappa, and choose some other victim!"

The lip of the father quivered for a moment, and the wife saw her advantage.

"Think, my lord," she continued, "how Sirdaee loves Heerappa; and the more so, that her noble father approved her choice: is not the pure heart of a wife a holier thing than even the altar of the dark Kali, and will you for ever cast it down, and trample upon its idols?"

Vain was the appeal, for mercy had fled before the image of the goddess, and the feelings of the father were lost in the superstitions of the priest.

"Woman!" replied Rugonath, in tones that, long after they were uttered, rung with

fearful meaning in the ears of the miserable mother, "dare not to speak to me, the high priest of the dread mysteries of Kali, of human love! I have sworn by the spear, and club, and trident of the goddess, that her chosen victim shall be hers; therefore, hear me! No longer earnestly yearning for the glorious distinction that awaits him, no longer burning for translation to the courts of Indra, Heerappa must at least be saved the crime of opposing the will of the great goddess; therefore, at the feast to-morrow, prepare a dish of rice so mingled with narcotic drugs, that he who eats will wake no more, and as the stupor seizes on his spirit, I will bear him thence, a still willing sacrifice, to the altar's foot. See that this is done; Rugonath commands but once."

Again alone, the wretched wife flung herself, in a paroxysm of grief, upon the ground, and wept for her daughter's sake tears of deep agony; but a Hindoo woman has learnt only the law of blind obedience to a husband's will, and well did poor Bheema know the utter hopelessness of opposing the mandate of her husband. The drugs were found, were mixed, and when placed in the hands of

Rugonath, the hapless woman sat with clenched hands and glaring eyes, speechless and alone, in the darkness of the harem.

The great feast was spread in the hall of Rugonath; a crowd of high-caste priests gathered round the huge piles of grain, and rice, and sweetmeats provided for the last day of Doorga's festival, and Sedasheo, the manly son of their host, with Heerappa, whose nuptials they had so lately celebrated, were there; but not a word was spoken of the sacrifice, though all looked trustingly on Rugonath.

The guests were seated, and an attendant bore forward two silver salvers, each having on it a pile of sweetened rice. "My mistress," said the man, "sends these; the one to her son Sedasheo, the other to the stranger priest Heerappa;" and, the salvers duly placed, the feast began.

Suddenly, the young Sedasheo rises from his seat; he utters an unearthly shriek, he springs for a moment from the ground, and sinking again helplessly upon his seat, the

Brahmin Rugonath springs hurriedly towards his son.

"Who hath done this?" he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder; "call hither a physician, and tell Bheema that I command her presence;" but ere the mandate was fully heard, a female form, with pallid cheeks, dishevelled tresses, and frenzied eye, rushed to the Brahmin's feet.

"'Tis I, my father, 'tis I, who am the murderer of Sedasheo; to avoid suspicion, as you commanded, two salvers were prepared with my mother's offering—but one alone was drugged. From her agony I learnt the dreadful truth, and, father, I have saved—my husband."

With one glance of devoted love on the prostrate form of his agonized wife, the young Brahmin rose from his seat and rushed forth from the assembly. Rugonath still remained beside his son, gazing into vacancy, and his countenance convulsed with powerful emotion. "Father," murmured Sirdaee, at length half-rising from the ground, while tears of agony rolled heavily over her wan cheek—"you will not slay my brother—you *cannot* shed the life-blood of your own, your

only son." The voice of Sirdaee roused the Brahmin from his reverie; for a moment he glanced around the crowd, and seemed to note the expression pictured in each hard and merciless face that glared on him in its cruel excitement; and then, stepping across the fainting form of the poor Sirdaee, he raised the senseless body of Sedasheo in his arms, and bore it rapidly through the thronging priests to the altar of the goddess Kali. Then, snatching from the garlands that wreathed its blade, the knife of sacrifice, and holding it towards the hideous idol, "I come," he exclaimed, "great goddess, to redeem my oath; behold thy sacrifice! And thou, my son, rejoice in the blessing of the goddess. Offended at the apostacy of Heerappa, her goodness and favour are still upon her priest, and thee has she chosen. Already I see thee throned in the courts of Indra, and smiling on me in the strength of thine immortality."

With maddened haste, the knife descended on its victim, and shouts of savage applause rang round the assembly. But for a short space did the infernal deities hold revel there; the closed doors of the temple were burst

open, and Heerappa, followed by armed men, rushed towards the altar of the dreadful Kali. Alas! the red, warm blood, flowing on every side, confirmed the truth, that the interference of the Peishwa had come too late for the exercise of aught but its avenging power.

Near the rise of the beautiful Kristna, among the noble mountain scenery of the Mahabuleshwar range, was a small, but richly sculptured, temple, and among the massy foliage that surrounded it, a fair woman might be seen, reclining for hours in silent contemplation. The peasants bowed reverently as they passed, for reason had fled from the poor Sirdaee; and the wandering fancies that chased each other through her shattered intellect, to their simple thoughts, endued her presence with the mysterious awe of a divinity; and yet, her gentle heart still beat with true tenderness towards him who was ever by her side—the lover of her youth—the husband she had saved!

CAIRO, WITH A VISIT TO A HAREM.

In visiting Cairo, a scene perfectly novel in all its features is presented to the traveller; to no other city, European or Asiatic, does it bear the slightest resemblance, nor can any description present it fully to the imagination. Although Mr. Lane has given its objects in detail, with pen and pencil of the most exact fidelity; although the tales of the *Arabian Nights* have surrounded them with all the interest of Oriental romance, and Mr. Hay's splendid lithographies are unrivalled in their truth of proportions and perfect beauty of execution; yet, with all these aids, the "mighty mis'r" must be *seen*, its streets traversed, and its crowds scrutinized, before any connected or distinct ideas can be obtained of a city so strange and so incongruous as this; which, however, becomes tedious

when the novelty of its scenes has passed away. The donkey-riding, the dark, narrow, crowded, and unpaved streets, the leaning minarets, the richly-sculptured mosques, the dress bazaars, and the coffee-shops, amuse for a time; but no sooner do the eye and the mind become accustomed to them, than annoyances are felt, neither few nor trifling, in the city of the Pasha. Streets filled with cold draughts, which the residents of Cairo call "ventilation;" bad odours, emitted by mud saturated with water from the canal which flows through the city; dark houses, the windows of which look, prison-like, on small square courts beneath; a mutilated, sore-eyed population, jostling one at every step; Sacki's water-bags, which stream perpetually forth upon the passer-by:—these are but a few of Cairo annoyances—and then, the musquitoes and the flies! but the latter deserve a chapter to themselves, with a preface dedicatory to Beelzebub, their lord.

Cairo, as I have said, must be seen to be known; and certainly there is enough to wonder at and to admire in its great bazaars; for, out of forty passers-by, twenty of the number will be of different costumes and

nations. Variety of population may be common to Constantinople, Calcutta, Paris, Vienna, Petersburg, London, or any other great metropolis, which is a commercial emporium; but combinations and groups such as appear in Cairo cannot be elsewhere presented to the traveller's attention, inasmuch as its political character, geographical position, and the interest of the neighbouring countries are essentially unique. In the cities of Turkey and India we may see turbaned Moslems in variety and abundance, red beards and black, with imaums and mosques, prayer-carpets and veiled women; but nowhere except in Cairo have we the Bedouin of the desert, the Copt from Jerusalem, the Arab from the Thebaid, with

> The Turk, the Greek, the Albanian, and the Moor,
> Here mingled in their many-hued array.

Of all these, the Bedouin, or *Beid-a-wee*, as he calls himself, attired in a cloak of goats' hair, with a variegated silk handkerchief, trimmed with tassels, girt round his head with a twisted rope, and mounted on the first of a long line of dromedaries, his companions on the desert waste, is the most interesting, from the associations we form between him

and his nomade life, his freedom, hospitality, laws, fierce contempt of danger, with his hatred of cities and their denizens. Unattracted by aught that glitters around him, the Beidawee passes through the great bazaars of Cairo as if unconscious of its wealth. The dignity of his bearing cannot be surpassed by priest or monarch, and we fancy, as we gaze on his unchanging countenance, that, once without the gates of the "dwellers within walls," the Beidawee, smiling again as the desert breeze fans his cheek, will mount his fleetest dromedary, and speed towards his tents, shaking the dust from his feet, in token of contempt for civilized life.

The showy Turk, on his high-bred Syrian horse, with its rich Mamlouk trappings, and his numerous attendants, who borrow their haughty mien from their self-satisfied master, presents the exact opposite to the dignified Beidawee, and carries the mind at once to the struggles of empires, the bigotry of Islamism, and all the artificial wants, splendid luxuries, and lavish expenditure of these cruel conquerors of Oriental nations. Following the Turk, probably, comes the ulema, or priest, clad in scarlet and fine linen, and

attended by lip-service as he goes, but little more, and he knows the crowd are hypocrites, who part to let him pass, for the Pasha has exalted the military service above priestcraft.

Nor must the women be omitted:—interesting everywhere, it must be confessed that they seem doubly so where custom secludes them from the common gaze. But, graceful as is the *saree* of a Hindoo woman, fascinating as travellers find the mantilla of the Spanish dames, and deeply mysterious as are the envelopes of the dark-eyed Jewish maidens, nothing can be said of the cloak and veil of the Cairo ladies but that they are supreme in ugliness, and the proboscis-like shade which falls over their faces, with the yards of black silk forming the mantles, and covering the rich dress beneath, make them look more like scarabæi, or sacred beetles, when they go abroad, than the graceful inmates of a harem; for nothing appears of the woman below this inflated form but a double slipper of red and yellow, with a pair of full dark eyes, which glance boldly around, unchidden and unfearing. Still, one cannot but feel an interest in these shrouded

figures as they amble by on their sleek, well-fed mules, adorned with prayer-carpets and jingling bridles, and our imaginations follow the mysterious dames to the privacy of their homes, to their daily occupations, their cares, their interests; we feel there is, after all, something pleasant in the *incognito* they enjoy, for not even a husband could recognize his wife so garbed, and we fancy a Turkish woman's fate not so bad, and withdraw a portion of our sympathy from ladies who can shop, chatter, and look about them as if they were really free in law, and not liable to the sack and the bowstring.

But Bedouins, Turks, priests, and women by no means comprise the features of a Cairo crowd, for the Arab, the Copt, the Albanian, the Greek, the Jew, must all have place; the naturalized foreigner and the European adventurer, the real *savan* and the pretender, the scientific enthusiast and the ignorant quack; nor must be unheeded the bond, bought with a price, the swaggering eunuch, and the female slave from Sennaar, her woolly head girt with a gay kerchief, and her neck decorated with coloured beads and necklaces of coins. Such are a few,

and really *but* a few, of the drops which compose the great sea of life which pours, as a continual flood, through the highways of Grand Cairo, the neighbouring streets being dull and empty as if suddenly deserted on some pestilential visitation.

Nothing in the form of out-of-door recreation can be imagined so essentially dismal as riding about the streets of Cairo, where, except in the dress bazaars, nothing is to be seen but shops filled with pomegranates, melons, and tomatas, or with dates, lanterns, and Turkish cheeses, rendered dim by the coating of flies settled thereon; and as there are no good lungs to the city but the great square of Esbequich, with its tanks of water, avenues of acacia trees, and itinerant coffee-makers, and no good ride but on the Shobrah road,—which is also an avenue, over which the branches of sycamores and acacias twine like gothic arches overhead, while from between them on either side pleasant glimpses are caught of a green and fertile country,—the Cairo visitor must, after a short time, either remain on his divan, and gaze through an arabesque window on a small square of damp earth,

or possibly on a landscape enlivened by a wretched-looking tree, and the ruined top of a minar, or take to Arabic and chibouk-smoking in self-defence, for there is no society to be had beyond the mere passing travellers at the hotels, nor any newspapers, periodicals, or books on subjects of common interest. And then, in this city of Cairo, it is dark ere the sun sets. Without a light, the police place all wanderers in custody; thus one goes out to dinner, preceded by an Ali or a Hassan, bearing in advance, with dignified pace, one of the Cairo fly-catching-looking paper lanterns, while it is yet bright daylight beyond the gates, and people coming in think you must be searching for truth, and search you might for a long time fruitlessly in Cairo; for of all the spots where cunning, Machiavelism, cant, and *hum* flourish, commend me to the city of the Pasha, from its generals and rulers, down to the ragged Arab, who bakes figures of blue pottery, and barters them as rare "antiques!"

One of the most agreeable places of resort in Cairo is the library of the Egyptian Society, for, in addition to the valuable store of learning on its shelves, it stands in a plea-

sant garden, the only place in Cairo where the sun-beams ever enter, I believe, and which is removed from the din of Arab tongues, the shouts of donkey-boys, and the perpetual cries of water-carriers and sherbet-sellers; it is also a delightful thing to be surrounded in this still, well-lighted retreat from noise and bustle, with vivid and faithful delineations of the strange city we are in, and to peruse the records of the learned, the enthusiastic, and the pious, who have been lured to the land of Egypt, wandering in search of knowledge, and have made its deserted cities, and their magnificent remains of art, the objects of their pilgrimage. If after a time the stranger wearies of these studies, he may go forth among shady foliage, and a few steps bring him to the residence of Clot Bey, and his menagerie of giraffes and curious fowls; this gentleman, with Suleiman Pasha, ranking first among the Frenchmen distinguished by the Pasha.

There are no public amusements at Cairo except the amateur French and Italian performances, which are excellent, and sustained with great spirit; but the theatre is open only on Thursday evenings, the rest

being unprovided with any recreation. The strangers at Hill's and Dumerg's Hotels usually meet after dinner, and talk over the expenses of boats to Thebes and camels to Jerusalem, of the impositions of dragomans, and the prices of Turkish dresses; but this is dull enough, as every thing of the same kind is in Egypt. The only museum is a private one, belonging to Dr. Abbott, the English hakeem; it contains a great many curious and valuable antiques, among which are the signet and necklace of Menes, with some splendid scarabæi and small figures, so exquisitely cut, as at once to remove from the mind even of persons who had never seen the beautiful sculptures of the Thebaid, all ideas of the Egyptians being unacquainted with the true proportions and real symmetry of the human form.

During my stay in Cairo, I had seen clouds of the male part of the population of every country and costume that could be met with thronging the ways, or displaying their tempting merchandize in shops rich with the beautiful cashmeres of Asia, the gorgeous fabrics of Turkey, and the soft woollen manufactures brought from the

countries of the west, Tripoli and Tunis especially, for the tribes of the desert; but unless when veiled and enveloped in that frightful black silk *hab'arah*, or in the shape of a hideous old Egyptian woman, the *femme de chambre* of our apartments, who hid her shrivelled skin and tattooed chin as zealously as the fairest under an old veil when she went out, I had not caught a glimpse of a woman; nor was I likely to do so, as in every case in which I sought an introduction to a Turkish harem, I was told at once, and without reservation, that the matter was *impossible*. The Pasha's family admitted none, and a story was told of some ladies having visited the harem of Ibrahim Pasha some time since, and filled the heads of his wives with such terrible notions of liberty and equality, that, on his next entrance to the harem, wives, favourites, and slaves flew with one accord at their astonished master, and demanded how he dared deprive them of the same indulgences enjoyed by English women. The Pasha, it is said, had enough to do to pacify the fair rebels, and as these were not fit notions to be entertained in a Turkish harem, it was at

once closed against foreign intruders. To visit Syrian harems might be easily effected by introductions at my command; but although the Syrian ladies observe the habits of seclusion common to the people among whom they live, as Christians, there is little remarkable about them, except the richness and grace of their costume, which, as Levantine, I had seen frequently before. In full remembrance, however, of Lady Wortley Montague's charming descriptions of her Turkish friends, all the difficulties I encountered only served to make me more determined, if possible, to overcome them, and I continued to question English, French, Arab, and Turk on the matter. At length I was told, with great secrecy, that a certain French woman, who had the *entrée* of the harems for the purpose of selling *bijouterie* and so on, could, for a "consideration," inquire if the ladies of a particular family would receive me as their visitor. The preliminaries were soon settled, and the inquiry satisfactorily answered: the family of Sami Pasha would receive me after noon on the following day, the first of the feast of Beiram. The three days which are devoted to this

great carnival are those of unmixed enjoyment to the Moslems, who, in feasting, dancing, and merriment of all kinds, inconsistent enough with the usual solemn demeanour of the professors of Islamism, find some equivalent for the sacrifices made, and some reward for the trying duties of abstinence enforced on them by the preceding month Ramadan; the same spirit which closes the shops, and sends their owners in holiday costume to the great fair held outside the Bab el Nas'r gate; which fills the coffee-houses, and patronizes almehs and buffoons; penetrates even to the mysterious retreats of the ladies, and mirth among young Turkish wives and Circassian slave-girls is often quite as boisterous as that of the male part of the community of a very inferior grade.

My amusement of the morning, from sunrise, had been to mix with the groups bound to the great scenes of festivity, and to observe the singular demeanour of a people merry upon principle. The common people, too happy in a holiday, were half-crazed by anticipation of enjoyment, and so disguised by clean attire and new head-dresses, that I

could not easily recognize our own servants, while the countenances of the better classes wore all a benignant expression, relaxed to a sort of easy satisfaction. On returning from the places set aside for the express purposes of festivity, and being eminently diverted with many of the scenes there enacted, I found a Sennaar slave waiting to conduct me to the house of the Frenchwoman under whose *chaperonage* I was to make by *début* in a Turkish harem. On arriving at her house, she told me that Sami Pasha's and Habbi Effendi's (the late governor of the citadel) where the only harems to which I could possibly be introduced, and that as the ladies of the latter were old, and the whole establishment "*trieste*," she had chosen to propose my visit to the family of the former. After a while, a younger Frenchwoman appeared as my guide, attired in Turkish costume, and bearing, as an unmarried person, a white veil with the black mantle. Her attire convinced me of a fact I had before doubted, namely, the real concealment afforded by the hideous veil, notwithstanding the exposure of the eyes with a portion of the cheeks and forehead immediately above

it, for when my conductress appeared, it was quite impossible to guess whether she was young or old, Arab, Turk, or European. The voice, of course, would render this *incognito* of no avail, but, according to Cairo manners, it is shameful for any man to address a woman in the street; and if a Turkish husband suspects that, beneath the folds of a hab'arah he might discover a jaunting inmate of his harem, he dare not set his mind at rest by the only test.

Half an hour's ride brought us to the Turkish quarter of the city, the most open and handsome in Cairo, for here the courtyards are large, and some of them had trees, with a few rays of sunshine flickering among the higher branches. At one of the largest of these courts we stopped, and dismounting from our donkeys, walked forward to a large doorway, shaded with a heavy curtain of green cloth, covered with red embroidery. This being lifted for our entrance by a woman slave richly dressed, and a eunuch with quite enough knives and pistols about him to have armed three stout grenadiers of our standing army, we found ourselves at the foot of a handsome flight of marble stairs, covered

with fine matting, and decorated with numerous pairs of small slippers of red and yellow morocco, the soles of the same material as the upper leather, soft, and without stiffening. Here my conductress divested herself of her out-of-door shroudings, and we ascended to a spacious hall, matted in a similar way, and hung with handsome chandeliers. About this hall a number of slave-girls were standing, all Abyssinians, but gaily and handsomely dressed, and wearing great quantities of gold, silver, and coloured ornaments. From this entrance chamber we were shewn into an apartment of splendid dimensions, the floor tessellated marble, and the arabesque ornaments of the window-frames relieved by rich painted glass; the walls were elegantly stencilled with very beautiful devices in French taste, and a raised divan surrounded the room, of pale blue satin, richly embroidered with gold flowers. In addition to this, small cushions and pillows were placed at the upper end of the apartment, of various colours, but similarly embroidered, some of pale green, others of blue and rose satin.

After a short time passed in admiring the

good taste and splendour of this Turkish room, and feeling some surprise that, beyond the actual furniture, the chandeliers, and divans, no evidence of womanly fancies was to be seen in the form of foreign toys or *bijouterie* of any kind, which seemed inseparable from French decoration, Turkish expenditure, and hours of idleness, the three young wives of Sami Pasha appeared, two of them hand-in-hand, the first wife and the last; the second walked alone, a little behind the others; she might feel aggrieved, and fancy the last importation of Constantinople beauty more affected her interests and influence than they did those of the earlier bride. Having greeted me courteously, all sat down on the divans, and I had an opportunity to admire them at leisure. They appeared all to be about the same age, probably fifteen; their faces were round, fat, and particularly fair, but the countenances of two were totally devoid of all expression, while the third, the last beloved, had a shrewish look, that augured ill, I thought, for the peace of the fourth bride, whenever it might please the Pasha to complete his conjugal establishment. The dress and decorations

of the ladies varied in colours only; in richness, material, and style, they were precisely alike; and strange and grotesque enough they looked, as may be supposed from a description. Faces, naturally pretty, were rendered laughable by misapplied care to render them more beautiful; the fine, dark eyebrow was painted in a broad arch of light sienna, extending from the temple to the centre of the nose; a large circle, like a black wafer, was stained on the lower part of the forehead, and the cheeks were highly rouged, until they emulated the inner leaves of a full-blown rose; not red, but a delicate tint used to its fullest strength. This combination of pink, black, and white, gave a most Grimaldi-like appearance to the faces of my pretty friends, and its singularity was increased rather than diminished by their head-dresses. These consisted of a small tarbouche or red cap, with a depending purple tassel, around which was wound a rich handkerchief, the whole worn very far back upon the head, with plaits of hair folded over it. On this handkerchief were clasped, on either temple, superb sprays of diamonds, cut and set in the English style, sparkling

with great brilliancy, and of enormous value; but the effect of these was spoilt by the centre ornament, which consisted of a tuft of short hair, curling upwards, and mixed with a bunch of common paper artificial flowers, placed so as to stand upright from the centre of the brow. The costume consisted of a figured satin bodice, of the Levantine form, with full trowsers, and a sort of pelisse worn over them, terminating in a train, which, as the ladies walked, was supported by little slave-boys; a fine Cashmere shawl, wound tightly round the waist, completed the costume. The materials of these dresses were of the richest description,—French satins figured with gold and silver, or brocades of the most exquisite colours and fabric; and among them I recognized many of the beautiful articles I had admired in the Turkish dress bazaar of El Khaleelee, particularly the Constantinople embroideries of coloured silk on fine white muslins, and the handkerchiefs and napkins worked and fringed with gold. In the whole attire of these Turkish girls there was nothing barbaric; the fabrics and jewels were all of European fashion, and very beautiful; all that a critic could have

objected to was the free use of disfiguring cosmetics, and in one or two cases, in consequence of the season, the adoption of a finely-embroidered cloth jacket, worn over the Levantine bodice, and looking very much as if it had been borrowed from the wardrobe of the Pasha.

After a short time had elapsed, a fourth lady entered similarly attired, but considerably older than the rest; she was still handsome, however, and the rouge, which disfigured the youthful faces, tended certainly to render hers more agreeable. This lady was followed by a troop of Circassian slave-girls, and on her approach the young wives of the Pasha rose, and put the hem of her robes to their lips. My conductress whispered me that she was the mother of their husband, and consequently chief in the harem. I thought there was something peculiarly pleasing in the manners of this lady, and fancied that, if the Pasha resembled her, his young wives might justly feel a little jealous of his affections; but, fortunately, such things are unknown among Moslem ladies, and when any dislike is taken to a slave who may be a chance favourite, the husband obligingly re-

moves her from the harem; but even an objection of this kind, I am told, is very rare. On the contrary, the ladies and attendants generally well understand their position, and should the husband unduly interfere, or attempt in any way to reduce expense, or infringe the rules of courtesy and custom, the harem makes common cause against him; and, it is said, solemn and dignified as the Turk looks abroad, he wears a more subdued aspect under the attack of female tongues, which sometimes greets the poor man in domestic life. Only imagine four wives and fifty slave-girls clamorous against some real or fancied outrage or privation, and then say if the Turk, with all his pipes, coffee, and prospective houris, is a happier man than he who hath but to endure the single-voiced reproaches of the shrew whom ill-fortune may have given to his bosom.

"After chatting for a short time, through the medium of my conductress, who spoke Turkish fluently, three Circassian girls entered, dressed in a costume similar to that of their mistresses, and, excepting the jewels, in fabrics of nearly equal richness. On coming into the apartment, they stood with folded

arms a little on one side, and were followed by three black slaves, two bearing silver salvers, covered with gold-embroidered napkins, and the third having a jewelled censer, from which rare perfumes were scattered round the apartment. At a signal from the lady mother, the slaves bearing the salvers advanced to me, and, removing the napkins, one appeared with richly-cut tumblers, filled with artificially-cooled water of the most perfect clearness, and the other supported vases of sweetmeats, with small gold spoons and saucers. After this refreshment, the slaves again took their places on either side of the door, and two more entered, bearing coffee in a similar way, the little china cups being held in outer cases of filagree silver work. Immediately after coffee, Circassian slaves brought to each lady a chibouk, twisted with gold and silver, with silver bowls and amber mouth-pieces, which they smoked, terrible as the custom may seem to our English notions, in a very lady-like, pretty way, gracefully reclining on their cushions, while the slave-girls, with grave countenances and folded arms, stood respectfully before them. There was to me some-

thing peculiarly disagreeable about these Circassians; they were tall, much taller than the Turkish ladies, with fine figures, brilliantly fair complexions, highly rouged, and eyes and hair intensely black; handsome, therefore, particularly handsome; and yet the style of beauty had that Gulnare-like expression, which led one rather to tremble than admire: there was neither softness nor feeling in the gaze of these fair Odalisques, but the expression was altogether fierce, stern, and betraying a capability for any but gentle deeds. As I glanced from the round, soft, baby-like faces of the Turkish mistresses to the haughty, imperious countenances of these Circassian slaves, and thought of them as spies over the wives and favourites of the master, I pitied the poor girls more for this companionship than for all that Turkish despotism might do: it seemed like the union of the sparrow with the hawk, and quite sure am I, that the mistress in a Turkish harem often trembles at the power of her slave.

Feeling some curiosity about the master of this spendid mansion, I ventured to make a few inquiries, which were answered by one of the young wives bringing me Sami Pasha's

portrait, painted by an artist at Constantinople. The portrait, which was in oil colours, and handsomely framed, the glass being protected by a veil of embroidered muslin, represented a florid and rather good-looking man, of about four-and-twenty, wearing the tarbouche, a blue frock-coat, and stock of English fashion, and kneeling, oddly enough, on a crimson velvet sofa. The ladies declared the resemblance perfect, and each, in token of respect, raised it in turn to her forehead, and handed it to the mother, who observed the same ceremony. I would have given a great deal at the moment, if the Pasha himself had entered, to have seen whether much difference existed in the general demeanour between the portrait and its original. There was no chance of this, however, for the Pasha had left Cairo for Constantinople, on a visit of ceremony to his master, the Sultan, and was not expected to return for a month: perhaps, had he been at home, the difficulty of my admittance to the harem would have been greater.

The mother of the Pasha apologized for not entertaining me with music and dancing, one of their most common amusements; but

as it was the feast of Beiram, a marriage was celebrating at the house of a friend, and the slaves, who would otherwise have performed, had been permitted to attend the feast. The almeh dancing, no longer common in the streets of Cairo, is yet the favourite recreation of the ladies of the harem, some of whom, with the *guawazeh*, or more generally employed dancing-girl, forms usually a part of every Cairo establishment of any distinction. The young ladies, however, displayed a variety of the Constantinople embroideries, all most beautiful in fabric and design, consisting, principally, of floss silk and gold flowers wrought on a clear white muslin ground; but as, unlike the Kincaub manufactures and embroideries of India, these rich articles are unwashable, their expense as costumes must be enormous. Turkish ladies usually embroider very beautifully, yet the wives of Sami Pasha absolutely did nothing but stroll from room to room, sip coffee, smoke chibouks, dress and re-dress themselves three or four times during the day. They obligingly offered to shew me over their apartments, and the whole party set forth, the ladies shuffling

along, much encumbered by loose trowsers, soleless slippers, and trains borne by little eunuchs, with Circassian slaves following with pipes, and the negress with the censer making up the group.

The apartments were all spacious, and furnished in similar fashion to that in which I had been received; in some were fountains of alabaster, however, to afford refreshment in the summer season, and in others, lines of mirrors set in the walls. The bath rooms were all lined with alabaster, having fountains of hot and cold water; but, curiously enough, the baths were not formed for reclining in, but were square and small, and probably about five feet deep, without steps, but with a crimson cord from the ceiling, by which the bather swung herself into the bath. I saw the calcined Mecca stone, commonly used by the Cairo women, and the fibres of the Syrian palm, both necessary to the bath toilette of the Turkish ladies, which in Egypt is a ceremony of no short endurance, nor common labour, rendering very necessary the rest afforded by the divans of the dressing-room, with its pipes and coffee.

From the house we strolled forth into a

garden of tolerable dimensions, but with a wall of hopeless height. The caged birds were here safe enough, and women of the rank of the Pasha's wives seldom leave home, unless to visit a friend on some state occasion, when they are strictly guarded. The garden contained several varieties of Oriental and European plants, and particularly the henna, which the Turkish ladies, like the Asiatic, use abundantly. I could not discover, either in the garden or the house, a single object calculated to afford my new friends amusement; there were no birds, nor fawns, nor tame fish to pet, no pictures to be looked at, children to be caressed, nor toys to be wearied of; their whole life seemed passed in apathetic idleness.

On leaving them, all courteously and kindly pressed me to repeat my visit; but, having intruded myself on them from curiosity, in the first instance, I did not feel sufficiently interested to desire to cultivate their acquaintance; for, polite and graceful as were these Turkish ladies, I looked in vain for the intelligent acuteness I had recognized so often among my Mahomedan friends in India, or the gentle manners and engaging

expression of the still more untutored and simple-minded women of a high-caste Hindoo family.

Education, the general epidemic of modern times, rages with fury at Grand Cairo, and while at present it includes Copts, Jews, and Arabs, would willingly extend its influences to the harems of the Turks. No one can sincerely and earnestly desire more than I do that intelligence should be spread abroad through the world; that prejudice and error should vanish before the light of truth, and that the women of every land should be given rational ideas and the power of personal resources to occupy the hours which must be passed in domestic privacy; but I am quite sure that all systems must fail that are applied generally, that is, without reference to the peculiar positions, character, taste, and conditions of those to whom they are applied. The feelings, intellects, and imaginations of the individuals to be educated must be influenced and attracted by subjects agreeable and inducing to them, nor must we lose sight of the fact, that although knowledge which we consider valuable may not be possessed, still ignorance

may not wholly prevail, and the Turkish lady who speaks Arabic and Turkish, and embroiders in gold and silks, may not consider herself so totally inferior to the young Englishwoman, who is accomplished after the fashion of her country. The sole object of all education seems to be to afford the power of exercise to the intellect, otherwise one accomplishment may be fairly enough weighed against another, and Arabic and Turkish, with the art of decorating fine muslins, may be quite as valuable to the lady of Cairo, as piano-forte playing and a general school education are to the women of England. But to do more than introduce additional accomplishments into the harems of the Turks, much must be done that is in the power of governments certainly, but not I fear of individual foreigners. The whole harem system must undergo a change; Turkish husbands, brothers, and fathers must learn to prefer Frank manners to their own, to look with contempt on a veil-less woman, and become themselves sufficiently educated to prefer an intelligent companion in their wives to a quadruple collection of breathing, moving, and splen-

didly-attired toys. For the ladies, I am sure that nothing would attract their interest or please their fancies but an exhibition of showy accomplishments—painting, or harp-playing, for instance. An Englishwoman possessing these would probably gain a general *entrée* to the harems, and, from being considered first in the light of an almeh, might eventually gain some influence; but as to books, globes, and the "useful arts," I can fancy nothing to follow their introduction but a series of most expressive yawns, with a clapping of little hands, and the appearance of pipes and coffee. It is far from my wish to speak severely of any views opposed to mine, as such are doubtless both sincere and zealous; I merely, therefore, offer an opinion on what my own experience induces me to think their inutility.

Sultan Musjeed is so fond of introducing Frank costumes and English saddles at Constantinople, and Mahomed Ali is so desirous of gaining the character of a civilized prince through the medium of his schools, and is so lax in his religious discipline, and so decided in lowering the priestly class by

the elevation of the military, that I see no reason why, under both the governments of the Turk and the Albanian, innovation may not go yet farther, even until the Turkish ladies become educated, and a Turk contents himself with one wife; but, for the present, the pretty subjects of the Sublime Porte will differ little from the charming Fatimas described by Lady Wortley Montague, in the pleasantest book, and one of the truest on Mahomedan manners, that was ever written.

SINDH AND ITS AMEERS.

PEOPLE who look for only comfort and good cheer, with constant amusement on the way, would do better to study the history and geography of Sindh by means of travellers' records, than to venture a personal expedition on its classic river; for its dust-storms and its deserts are alike grievous to the eye, while the sterility of a misgoverned country afflicts the traveller, on whichever side his view may fall.

For myself, however, I have found considerable interest in Sindh; but this has been derived from an intimate acquaintance with the country, its princes and people; and the traits which I thought most characteristic I have endeavoured to group together, for the purpose of affording to the reader, if pos-

sible, a *coup d'œil* of this new country of our occupation.

The great feature in Sindh is, of course, its river; and although I have since voyaged upon the beautiful stream of Egypt, the Nile gives me no reason to alter my opinion, that the Indus is far the noblest river of the East.

During the inundations caused by the melting of the mountain snows, this great stream rushes furiously down from the magnificent range of the distant Himalayas to the sea, breaking down banks, whirling along trees, and in its mighty strength defying even the power of steam. The fisher, at this season, draws back appalled from its waves; and the native craft, rude and strong as it is, dare not oppose its currents. I have sailed on the Indus when the eye could not descry its banks, and when a body thrown on it was instantly dragged down by the power of its whirlpools, and seen no more; but the most remarkable instance I remember of this peculiar feature of the Indus, was on one occasion when I happened to be standing in the garden of the Sukkur residency. A crowd of people were crossing

with horses and goats from the opposite bank of the river, when, suddenly a movement upset the boat; it was once only whirled round by the current, and in a moment more not a vestige remained of either it or its hapless occupants.

In the winter months, however, the stream is sluggish, calm, and placid; and on its bosom floats fearlessly the pullah fisherman, earnestly engaged in his vocation, or voyaging, it may be, to a neighbouring village. Few things in Sindh appear to the traveller so strange as this; and however often he may have voyaged upon the Indus, and consequently remarked these fishermen, he can never regard them without interest and curiosity. These fishers all live on the river banks, and farm it in tracts; they subsist their families on the proceeds of their toil, and procure them in the following way. Their chief property consists of an earthern vessel, and a coarse net fastened to a forked bamboo. On shore, the fisher carries this vessel on his head, and the net upon his shoulder, so that his implements do not incommode him much; but when at the river's edge, he casts the vessel, like bread upon the water, and

himself on it, and strikes out into the midst of the stream. Here he expects his prey, and holds his net perpendicularly in the stream until he snares the fish; on which, taking it from the toil, he mercifully stabs it (which, after all, is more pitiful than suffering it to gasp forth its life on a cold marble slab), and drops it into the vessel, commencing sport anew. The pullah is a delicious fish, and the Sindhians broil it in a fashion calculated to tempt the most fastidious epicure to eat thereof; but, as a good Mahomedan, the fisher never rises from the water without smoothing his beard, and uttering a "Bismillah!" which sort of grace seems to entitle him to his feast.

It is very remarkable how fearless these people are when seated on this description of frail craft. I remember once to have been voyaging up the Indus in the Planet steamer, the rate at which we were going casting up mimic waves of no inconsiderable size, when, suddenly looking down, I saw a Sindhian not lying, but seated on the common earthen vessel, already within the influence of the steamer. There was not a particle of fear perceptible in the man's de-

meanour; but, on the contrary, he sat with folded arms and upturned face, smiling most knowingly at us, and shewing the finest teeth that could be imagined, for which he owed much, I fancy, to his river diet. The fishermen of the Indus are all a fine race, and their wives and daughters tall, robust, and often handsome; they share the toils of the men, and commonly steer the boats, which are sometimes their only home. The costume of these damsels is more picturesque, but not so graceful as that of the Hindoo women of India; they wear a bodice of cloth of various colours, sewn together in horizontal stripes, and decorated with bits of looking-glass, surrounded with embroidery, a somewhat scant petticoat, and a handkerchief which fastens across the head; but, instead of turning their faces to the wall with that provoking affectation of modesty so common in India, the Sindhian lady meets your gaze with a cheerful smile, and wishes you good morning as heartily, as if she were of the sex who inherit freedom as their birthright.

From the cheapness and abundance of turquois, which are brought to Sindh in large

quantities from Persia, the women, even of the labouring class, use them as ornaments; and the contrast of the bright blue stone against the cheeks of these nut-brown maids is extremely pretty. They are favourites, too, from being considered, as they are in Egypt, preservatives against the evil eye.

The country of Lower Sindh, between Hyderabad and Karrachee, is much more pleasing to the eye as seen from the river than that above; and this arises from the number of hunting-grounds that skirt the banks; and as these form a very peculiar feature in Sindh, both as affects its scenery and people, I will endeavour to describe one that I visited, which will convey an idea of the whole, as they vary little but in size.

A thick fence surrounded a large forest of trees, brush and underwood, which extended to some distance from the river banks. Entering this by a small wicket, we proceeded along a narrow pathway, surrounded by dense foliage, which led to the centre of the hunting-ground. Here, between the trees, in an artificial space, appeared a small pool of clear, bright water, literally obscured by fowl of almost indescribable varieties; and from this,

in various directions, numerous little avenues, leading back among the tangled brushwood into the closest retirements of the forest. On one side was a small mud hut, open in front, in which sit the Ameers, surrounded by their retainers; the wood is then beaten from the confines towards the centre, when animals of almost every description—deer, wild hog, sambur, black buck, hares, and small game—rush pellmell down the avenues, and are fired on by the matchlocks of the princes and their huntsmen.

So infatuated are the Ameers with this their favourite sport, that they pursue it madly on all occasions, and the finest portions of the country are overgrown by hunting-forests. All are situated on the banks of the river; and to gain them, the princes embark in their *jumpties*, or state pleasure-barges, which transport themselves and their retainers to any hunting-ground they may select. These jumpties are excessively gay and picturesque; they have pavilions, covered with crimson embroidered cloth, to shelter the princes and their friends; are adorned with numerous flags, and commonly crowded with Belooche and Affghan retainers, whose

many-hued attire, mingled with the brightly-coloured caps of the Sindhians, is singularly gay in its general effect. And then the jumpti itself is a long rakish-looking craft, carrying two sails, and so fast under a fair wind, that not even the Greek caique could skim more swiftly along the waters. Nor is minstrelsy wanting to increase the royal luxury, for the eastern drum sounds from its decks with the warrior song of the wild Belooche.

The Ameers appear never to be manageable except on these excursions; and whenever a matter of serious import is proposed to them, they uniformly interrupt the preface by an invitation to a hunting-ground, and there, between the reports of matchlocks and the wild shouts of the huntsmen, discuss the most important affairs of state. The expense of these establishments is of course enormous; and I was assured that every head of game killed in the hunting forests cost the Ameers fifty pounds, and this without reference to the value of the land, if otherwise employed.

Although, in India, I have seen the gentle inmates of the harems peep through the

lattices of their cages to see wrestling and buffalo fights, the ladies of the lords of Sindh are never suffered to share in the pleasures of the chase; but are constrained to remain in the fort of Hyderabad, amusing themselves with the costly, though barbaric toys purchased from the Cabool merchants. Of these I was once shewn the magnificent posts of a charpoi, or native bedstead, intended for the palace; they were each about a foot in height, and incrusted with precious stones, emeralds, and rubies; the value of each was estimated at two hundred guineas. The wives of Meer Nusseer Khan and Meer Sohrab, the principal Ameers, are Belooche women, and said to be remarkably handsome, but I found it quite impossible to obtain an entrance into the harem for the purpose of judging for myself. Meer Nusseer Khan is a handsome man, possessing remarkably dignified and courteous manners, but his character is firm, and his affection for our rule but slight; his son, also, is a fine lad, who has already made some progress in the acquirement of the English language.

Of all the princes of Sindh, however, I was most charmed with Meer Ali Moorad, of

Khyrpore, who is the very *beau-ideal* of a strong-hearted and independent chief. He is "the last of the barons"—the only one of all the Sindhian rulers, who, consistent in his independence from first to last, refused all connection with the British as allies, and held his own strongholds calmly but sternly, alike uninfluenced by either our threats or our promises.

On one occasion we had encamped on the opposite side of the river to the forts of Ali Moorad, and in the midst of some fine hunting-grounds, when the prince announced his intention of crossing the Indus to meet us, and do the honours of his preserves. For three days after this declaration of his highness's will, the Indus, at the usual ferry, was literally covered with boats and rafts, laden with the retainers, the huntsmen, the horses, matchlocks, tents, dogs, and sporting material of the Meer, and, last of all, with much labour, was brought over the hunting-elephant, with his howdah and chains, and driver and cook,—a large boat-load of themselves. The day succeeding this arrangement, the Meer and his immediate followers appeared, and rode to the encampment pre-

pared for their reception, about a mile from our own.

The Ameer's tent was remarkably splendid; it was made wholly of bright crimson cloth, richly embroidered, and surrounded with an outer wall, to keep off the people. The interior was decorated with hanging lamps, rich Persian carpets, and large cushions of purple velvet, worked with seed-pearls and gold; while the entrances were sentinelled with a body-guard, dressed in a uniform similar to that worn by the soldiers of the Punjab, with English muskets, and in every way well appointed. At some distance from the tent, bodies of horsemen had picketed their steeds, whose gay crimson housings lay in strange confusion on the ground, mixed up with swords and spears, matchlocks and hubble-bubbles (pipes).

There were, on this occasion, some six hundred of the Ameer's followers, the majority of them Belooches and Affghans. These worthies, who receive but nominal wages as retainers of the prince, are billeted on the villages, they and their horses; a measure by no means satisfactory, I should

think, either to the goats or fowls, neither to the owners of the corn-fields.

The day after his arrival, when the Meer himself, Moslem as he is, had recruited with a certain, or rather an uncertain, quantity of Curaçoa, and the elephant had devoured an incredible number of grain-cakes, to the infinite recreation of the village children, it was announced that Meer Ali Moorad would commence his sports by the attack of a tigress and cubs that had shewn themselves in the neighbourhood, and been tracked by the huntsmen. As we had been requested to accompany him, however, his highness expressed his intention of paying me a visit of ceremony on his way.

Our suite of tents was sufficiently commodious, but we were desirous of throwing as much pomp and dignity round the occasion as possible, and consequently spread forth all the Persian rugs in our possession; grouped guns, swords, pistols, and daggers in every direction; put half-a-dozen more rickety chairs in stately rows than there was really room for, inasmuch as the self-satisfaction of an Asiatic always rises in exact pro-

portion to the height of his seat, and a man of the same rank will feel grossly insulted if he is put on a cushion while his friend occupies a chair; and these arrangements satisfactorily made, we had but to cause the sepoy guard to form an avenue in front, and the most roaring horses to be saddled and brought forward, when all was declared in the most satisfactory order for receiving Meer Ali Moorad, the Belooche chieftain of Dejee.

The word "punctuality," to an Asiatic, merely conveys to him the idea of something he is bound to break; and, therefore, when Ali Moorad sent to say he would be with us punctually at eleven, we of course knew that he would arrive about two; and, as we expected, about that time a tremendous shouting was heard, with the discharge of matchlocks, and some five hundred armed and mounted men, accoutred equally for the war or for the chase—with spears glancing brightly in the sunlight, flags floating on the breeze, with hawks jingling loudly their silver bells on the woodman's wrist—dashed over fence and brushwood into the inclosure that surrounded our tents. After

shouting forth the prince's titles, the retainers of his highness backed their snorting, rearing, but well-trained horses, leaving the Meer, with his favourite attendants, as a sort of tableaux, in the centre of the group. The Meer then dismounted, and our sepoys presented arms.

One trait among Asiatics has always excited my admiration and surprise; it is, their extreme courteousness of demeanour, and their possession of a politeness of manner, which we consider in England to be only acquired by constant intercourse with good society. Thus Meer Ali Moorad, who had never seen an Englishwoman in his life, and had associated with none but the wildest and most warlike of the tribes about him—whose life was passed in sallies from his fort, or in sports of the field—now entered my tent, and paid his compliments to me with the air and grace of the most finished courtier.

The Meer is a fine-looking man, about forty years of age, and was splendidly dressed in a lilac satin robe, confined round his waist with a scarf of gold thread, a similar fabric forming his turban. A gold and green embroidered strap crossed his shoulder, and

supported a diamond-hilted sword; while several daggers and knives, richly gemmed, appeared above the folds of his girdle.

An Asiatic's salutation is a much more laboured affair than the English "How d'ye do?" for their leisure gives them time to be polite, and they use it at length. Thus, as soon as Meer Ali Moorad was seated, he asked us, one after the other, if we were "well, *quite* well, better than usual?" And being satisfactorily assured that we could be no otherwise in the presence of his highness, he returned to the charge, and put round the same questions again, in the same rotation, a second and third time. This over, his favourites entered and sat round him—a strange, wild-looking, splendidly-attired set of Patan warriors; and then the discourse fell on guns and horses, and flint-locks and percussion, until the Meer, calling me his sister, and presenting me with a pair of Cashmere shawls worked in gold, expressed his desire to proceed to the chase; whereon all the people, who had been feeding their roaring steeds on the ripe ears of corn in the adjoining field, mounted in haste, and with a tremendous clatter of carbines and

iron stirrups, brought their horses, rearing, plunging, and kicking, to the front again; and we all stood, bridle in hand, until the Meer had mounted, and his titles and virtues had been duly shouted forth; whereon, midst a cloud of dust that nearly obscured our horses' heads, we also found our saddles, and joined the Meer.

Some four miles' riding brought us to the ground to which the tigress and her cubs had been tracked; and we here found that a species of mud tower had been erected, in which we were, with inglorious safety, to watch the proceedings of the huntsmen. These unfortunates, who are paid, like the driver of an elepliant, a certain monthly salary, in consideration of the probable chance of their forming a first course for their noble game, were aided by a large number of yet more unfortunate Sindhians, who, without any inducement at all but the prince's will, had been dragged from their fields, armed with a sword and club, and promoted to the duty of doing battle with the tigress. Leashes of huge powerful Affghan dogs were then brought forward; the lair of the tigress surrounded by beaters of drums, shrill pipers,

and armed men; the dogs were slipped, and the battle commenced. The tigress, with a loud roar, burst forth, followed by her cubs, to meet their enemies; and dogs, sword and matchlock men, villagers and huntsmen, surrounded their prey, and commenced the attack. The height of the reeds and brush-wood prevented our seeing more than the heads of the hunters, and now and then the bright sleek back of the tigress; but her infuriated roar told us that she was making a noble defence, which ended, however, in a shout of victory, and the fall of her own and the mangled bodies of her cubs. The dogs were dragged off, panting and wounded; and an unfortunate villager, whose face and eye had been fearfully torn in his battle with one of the cubs, was brought forward to the foot of our tower, his face streaming with blood, and his appearance betraying great agony. The Meer commended his courage, and directed him to approach him. From this order, I expected at least that the prince purposed to present him with money, make him huntsman, or remunerate the poor creature in some substantial way or other, for his misery and pain. However, as soon as

he approached, Ali Moorad turned round, snatched from the dirty shoulders of a matchlock-man a scarf composed of about three yards of coarse blue cotton, and threw it to the villager as his recompense, when the man retreated from the presence; and the people commended the generous condescension of the prince, in giving away what did not belong to him, with as much fervour as if he had bestowed on the wounded man a dress of brocade, and made him governor of a province.

The Sindhians are a grave, sad people, and the sound of dancing, the voice of music, is seldom heard among them. It would be strange, however, were it otherwise, where life is held as nought when its loss may contribute to the ruler's pastimes; where the ground, which should yield corn to the husbandman and fruit to the planter, is overrun with rank weeds and thorny bushes, to shelter wild and dangerous beasts; and where the villager tills his field with his sword by his side, and the grain-seller stands with his matchlock in his hand in the market-place, to guard his property from robbery by the prince's followers.

The battle against the tigress having ended, we returned to our tents, where, in the evening, the Meer sent the murdered animals as a compliment to me, with the request, as a comfort to himself, that we would send him "a few bottles of Curaçoa;" two were sent, and in about an hour a horseman galloped up again to say, that his highness having found these very good, would thank us for some more! Mahomed, knowing the value of temperance to health in the climate of the East, forbade the use of wine to his followers. But Moslems, as they are, this prohibition sits very lightly on the consciences of the rulers of Sindh, who eat, drink, and estimate champagne and Curaçoa as highly as if their prophet had never taken the trouble to form a religion at all.

In common, however, with the lowest of their subjects, the princes are fearfully superstitious, and therefore it was that Meer Ali Moorad directed that the bones of the tigress should be preserved in his fort of Dejee, to protect it in case of attack, and to save its inhabitants from the evil eye, disease, and death.

If one were to class man as he is in the

East, it would certainly be as a talking animal, so unwearyingly do the people indulge in the privilege of speech; and, therefore, around our tent sat groups over huge fires, the evening of the chase, talking the battle over, and eulogizing their personal feats.

An Asiatic never fails to make the most of his prowess, and so was it on this occasion; but the most horrible vain-boasting was made by our moonshee, the veriest coward on earth, and yet desirous of being thought a perfect Roostum. This man, the moment the tigress appeared, I saw snatch up his matchlock, and rush in the agony of fear through the thicket, losing his turban by the way; he was now telling a most attentive party, his listeners, that he had been foremost when the tigress rose from her lair; that he stood firm, and fixed his eye on hers, to awe the brute, but that she struck, with one blow of her vast paw, the turban from his head, and bounded past him. No one dared to doubt this story of the valiant speaker's, for every one would have told a tale too similar; and, therefore, approbation was expressed by a general "*Shah bash*"

(well done!), and the narrator twisted his moustache with an air of perfect triumph.

In a few days the curse of the Meer's presence was withdrawn from the thoroughly-sacked villages around us, and we accompanied him to Sukkur, one of the prettiest spots on the river; it is now the head-quarters of our troops in Sindh, and will continue so, it is said, as "Victoria on the Indus." In time, therefore, we may hope that the hunting-forests of the Ameers may be changed to fields rich in produce, and the gay jumpties, no longer bristling with the swords and matchlocks of the retainers who desolate the country, may be devoted to the pastimes of princes, peaceful and wise of rule.



THE RAJPOOT BRIDE.

A TALE OF THE NERBUDDA.

It was the merry month Phalgun (corresponding with our earliest spring-time), when, by the bright waters of the clear Nerbudda, were assembled the motley groups, who, having quitted the thickly-peopled city of Mandana, were now gathering together to celebrate the fifth day of their great Rajpoot holiday; and already, although it yet wanted an hour of sunset, was the soft green sward covered with thousands of spectators.

The scene was beautiful; but, for our purpose, it had the additional merit of well displaying the general appearance and manners of the people, for, as the festive entertainments yet awaited the arrival of the prince, groups were scattered here and there, as idleness or fancy led them, with no

definite object but to while away the intermediate time. Here, the young Rahtore chief, his turban of checked cloth, new, and tastefully arranged, and his smooth moustache proving his desire to attract some admiring glances from the fair Rajpoot maidens who might grace the fête, leaned upon his shield, while, to a wondering group of quiet citizens, he described the wild sports of the *Ahairea*, or great spring hunt, in which he, with all the warriors of the court, had been engaged but the day before; and as he tells them of the hunter's feats, of the deep ravines, the tangled forests, the stony hills, where, ever foremost in sport as war, their gallant rajah, Jesswunt Singh, spurred his foaming steed on the path of the savage boar; as he describes the accidents of the day, the many riders thrown headlong from their saddles, the onward crashing of the wounded beast, heedless of reedy bank or rushing torrent, and then how, as leader of the desperate chase, the prince pressed ever on, although beneath him two horses had been goaded unto death by the tusks of the bristly foe,—a murmur of applause and wonder ran round the circle of his listeners,

while the stoutest of the party, the magistrate of Mandana, roared forth, as if in right of precedence, "*Wah! wah!* great is the Rajah Jesswunt Singh!"

Carriages, drawn by milk-white bullocks, having body-cloths of crimson silk, richly embroidered, reaching almost to the ground, and the large horns of the animals, doubled in length by silver tips, on each of which jingled a merry bell, slowly approached, bearing parties of women and children, whose massive ornaments of gold and jewels, with their bright and rich attire, small, beautifully-formed hands, and eyes beaming with mirthful expectation, peep forth from the canopy intended to screen them from remark; and so it would have done on any other day, but on this, as one of general liberty, the curtain is less tenaciously secured than usual.

On a rising knoll, partly sheltered by a shading tree, sit a party of bards, tuning their vinas and sitarrs in readiness to accompany the songs in honour of the chief; while beneath, on the bright grass, a group of elders have spread their little carpet (that looks like the cross upon a Templar's

breast), and are busily engaged in playing thereon the well-known game of *pachesee*, while among the crowd, with tinkling anklets, bold and unveiled features, handsome, graceful, and yet unpleasing aspect, stroll *taifahs* of nâtch-women, closely followed by the wandering Gosaen, his body smeared with ashes, his countenance rendered hideous with stripes of turmeric and cinnabar, a bunch of peacock's feathers surmounting the braids of coarse hair that circle his head like a tiara, while over his broad shoulder depend, from a slight bamboo, strangely-formed vessels, covered with scarlet cloth and adorned with many bells: the credulous believe the vases to contain real water of the sacred Ganges, and, therefore, as he moves along, shouting forth the names and attributes of the gods, the crowd make way, and gaze with mingled awe and wonder on the towering form of the sturdy saint. But a moment more, and the sun sinking below the horizon, every eye is turned towards the city of Mandana, for it is the instant declared auspicious by the astrologers; and winding from its gates, appears a brilliant *cortége*, when, as the form

of the rajah, Jesswunt Singh, is seen towering above the rest, a hundred rockets shoot into the air, the bards spring to their feet, the *pachesee* players relinquish their undecided game, the Rahtore forgets his tale, and all hurry forward to commence their sports.

The prince who now advanced, surrounded by armed followers, was the idol of the Rajpoot people. Larger in stature, darker in complexion, than is usual in his race, Jesswunt Singh was yet eminently handsome; while, descended from the purest ancestry his land could boast, he was alike skilful in sport, intrepid as a warrior, and courteous in demeanour. The best rider in Rajpootana, and unrivalled in the use of the matchlock and sword, the god of Kumara was supposed to hold him in especial favour, and to judge from the opinion of the lovely daughters of his race, love was as ready to become his patron as war could be. But as no man can be perfect, whether Christian, infidel, or heretic, so did this Pagan prince, to his many warlike accomplishments and winning graces, add a haughty spirit, an overbearing will, and passions little accustomed to con-

trol; the last by no means checked, but rather excited, by ambition and success, were running somewhat wildly into the excess of tyranny, rendered worse, perhaps, by his belief in the superstitions of his country, and by the flattering predictions of the priests and poets, who were said to mix too intimately in his councils.

As the *cortége* of the rajah now gained the centre of the plain, and the prince reined up his fiery steed, of the true Lakhi breed, beside the five-coloured banner, which is the emblem of Rajpoot royalty, the *Jaities*, or wrestlers, first appeared, and amused the crowd with their displays of adroitness and of strength, until Jesswunt Singh, casting his scarf towards the winner of the *akara* (arena), the athletæ, with many low salaams, retired among the crowd.

And now, at a signal from the prince, a group of retainers approached, bearing the weapons necessary for the sport peculiar to the day. A shield of rhinoceros hide was first presented, exquisitely transparent, bossed, and beautifully enamelled with the fine gold and silver work of Cutch. Then came the bow of buffalo-horn, with the reed arrows

curiously barbed with many a quaint device; but the Lahore matchlock and the Damascus blade were alike rejected, and in lieu of these, the prince, slinging the bow and arrows across his richly-embroidered robe, selected numerous discs of shining metal, and smilingly directing his followers to do the same, crossed the arena with some dozen horsemen, when, wheeling his horse gracefully, he awaited the signal for the mimic contest. At this moment, a bard, crowned with a jasmine wreath, springs between the combatants, and lightly touching the strings of his sitarr, first singing a couplet in praise of the dexterous skill and valour of his prince, and of "the liberal hand which, although it empties the royal coffers, fills them again with the prayers of mankind," he wittily reminds the crowd, that from the mirth of "*Holica*" even kings are not exempt; Jesswunt Singh, accepting the challenge, casts his glove, well filled with coins, towards the minstrel, and, attended by his party, gallops furiously forward. In mid course, he is arrested by the opposing group, and then ensues a brilliant scene. Each dexterous and graceful rider wheels

and caprioles his high-bred steed around the course, pursuing his antagonist of the hour, jesting pleasantly, as each in turn appears to fly; but, as they meet again, the metal discs are lightly thrown, and from between the plates of each showers of red powder rapidly escape, half-blinding the combatants, and producing shrieks of laughter from the crowd, who themselves are not idle, but, mixing in the sport, deluge each other with coloured water, or half-suffocate all around with handfuls of the *abir*, carried in their wallets. The prince at length wearies of the sport, and holds his shield above his head; at the signal, the chiefs rein in their horses, the crowd draw back, and from tall poles, crowned with seemingly harmless bouquets of fresh flowers, fireworks of the most brilliant varieties suddenly burst forth, some darting high into the deep blue sky, and others running, serpent-like, upon the ground, to the mingled amusement and terror of the crowd.

But soon, a pair of powerful bullocks, richly caparisoned, and mad with fright, are seen dashing across the plain, and in the carriage that they violently whirl along, a wo-

man's form appears, with arms outstretched towards the crowd. All eyes are turned upon her; while the furious animals, with glaring eyes and expanded nostrils, heads bent to the ground, and heedless of all that opposes them, speed on. "Alas! alas!" shrieks a nâtch-girl among the throng, "they make for the river, and the beautiful Vassanti will be lost!"—"Ha!" exclaimed the prince, "the daughter of the sage Harita in peril such as this!" and snatching a spear from an attendant, he spurs to intercept their path. In breathless agony, the affrighted people gaze, one question in the mind of each: "Will Mandana's prince fall before the maddened beasts whose headlong course he now essays to check?" Silence deep and hushed affords them no reply, but suddenly, as with headlong course the animals rush on, the prince reins back his charger. Is it his intent to fly? The thought is treason, so well is proved the bravery of Jesswunt Singh. And now, with tearing gallop, amid a cloud of sand, the maddened animals approach; they near the prince, who rises in his saddle, balancing his spear aloft. A loud cry bursts from the

crowd—the beasts *must* overthrow the rajah: but no, his spear passes through the heart of one, and as it falls writhing on the ground, Vassanti, springing from the carriage, falls senseless into the arms of Jesswunt Singh.

In the palace of Mandana, alone, and wrapped in contemplation, reclined the warrior rajah; and well might one, wearied with the fatiguing sports and pastimes of the last few days, have selected this as the fitting spot for refreshment and repose. From the open window appeared a lovely country, rich in dark woods, and bright with flowing waters. The palace itself was of pure white marble, beautifully sculptured; reservoirs and fountains, of fanciful designs, inlaid with shell mosaics, refreshed the eye with bright jets or lake-like stillness, while richly-stained glass, picturing the heroic deeds of the Rajpoot princes of Mandana, tinted the rays of light that fell upon a terrace surrounded with parterres of flowers, rare for their beauty and their perfume, and contrasting well with the shade of the plumed palm, the widely-spreading tama-

rind, and the beautiful acacia. Beyond, shone the bright stream of the Nerbudda, with its indented and grassy margin, now only traversed by the pilgrim, or the priest wending his way to the gorgeously-sculptured temple of Krishna, the pinnacle of which just peeped above the sacred trees, whose lower branches dipped into the fair stream that gave them growth.

Yet, calculated as this stream was to attract the eye of Mandana's prince, it is doubtful if he saw it, for, although gazing on the plain, it was quite evident that his fancy was dead to all but the memories of the past, and that the plain, still and vacant as it really was, appeared to him yet thronged with hundreds of his people, gazing wildly on the hapless girl, whose threatening doom his hand had turned aside; and as his strongly expressive countenance thus shadowed forth the images of the mind, changeful emotions chased each other on his brow, as if his judgment were called upon to be the umpire, where his fancy and his reason disagreed; but fancy, as she is apt to do, proved the better arguer, and Jesswunt Singh, with a smile playing upon his lips,

and his fine person drawn to its utmost height, rose and approached the window, breathing, as he did so, his thoughts aloud.

"And why not? am I not all great, all-powerful? and shall not I command all things to my will? True, as the ruler of a rich territory, and feared by every weaker power, the princes of India seek earnestly the alliance of Jesswunt Singh; yet is the priest of Eklinga's fane second only to his master, while his lovely daughter well is named the 'Flower of Rajasthan;' and more than this—did not Harita himself declare, in the spirit of wise augury, that the renown of Jesswunt Singh, expanding like the lotus, should spread over all, and that the star of his destiny should shine unquenched until he, burthened with life, should desire to hasten its obscurity? And what means this, but that, in heaven's bright page it is decreed, that a career brilliant and glorious shall be mine, until, in the natural waste of strength and decay of years, I shall desire to seek younger and fresher joys in a new existence? and with *such* a destiny, shall Jesswunt Singh act like men

unfavoured by the gods, rather than as controlling all things to his will? I will command hither Eklinga's priest, and advise him of my decision."

Tediously passed the time until the sage Harita bent before his prince; but when he did so, his aspect was one well calculated to excite respect. His flowing robe of snow-like muslin, his folded turban of the same fine texture, the chaplet of gold beads around his neck, bespoke him of a rank possessing influence, both as a noble and a priest, while the grave, yet mild, expression of his fair and handsome countenance, the transparent delicacy of his well-formed hand, and the intense fire that, despite his age, shone from his large dark eye, proved him to possess those advantages of caste which, combined with unusual learning, gave to the sage Harita power of no common order, even over the fiery spirit of the prince whose mandate he had now obeyed.

"My son," began the priest, "I come to give thee counsel, if such you seek—consolation you cannot need, for your brave heart and ready hand, your youth, the love of

your people and your soldiery, with the approving care of the gods of Ind, leave no avenue for care."

"Before the mirthful festival of the great Phag, my friend," replied the prince, "had you spoken thus, it had been well, and contented with such courteous words, I carelessly, perhaps, might have acknowledged they were true; but now, indeed, I seek for aid, not counsel; and I entreat you, give it me."

As the rajah spoke, the changing countenance of Harita bespoke doubt and hesitation; he bent his eyes anxiously on the prince, and said, "My lord, I see not how Eklinga's priest can aid the purposes of Jesswunt Singh; yet deign to enlighten and command him, for well you know, my son," he added, in a softer tone, "all that he hath is thine."

"Ah!" replied the prince, "'tis well, Harita; and now hear me: devoted to war and sport, carelessly, as thou knowest, have I met proposals of alliance made by the neighbouring princes, some even rejecting, at the chance of war, loving not to fill my harem with wives struggling for supremacy,

and involving me in their domestic broils; when returning from my sports, the mimic form of war, I would rather care to hear the voices of my bards, singing to their well-tuned instruments tales of Rajpoot bravery, than the many words of angry women; but now, Harita, Mandana's prince bends beneath the flowery bands of the blooming Camdeo, and announces to his counsellor and friend, that he seeks a bride."

"My son, thou doest well," was the calm reply. "Among the daughters of our land, some, indeed, there are, fond of rule, loud of tongue, apt in intrigue, bringing feud and discord in their train; but choose worthily, my son, and the gods are pleased. Let thy bride have a gentle nature, and above all things a soft name; let her have an eye like a sunbeam, and a lip pure as the forest stream, and she shall be like music in your harem, and like a change of modes played upon soft instruments."

"You speak well," replied the prince, smilingly, "and hit my humour pleasantly enough, and yet your words are rather those of a poet than a priest, methinks."

"My son," gravely replied Harita, "I

speak even as I am, a teacher of the laws of Menu. Has he not said, where woman is not honoured, in that house shall all therein perish? And is it not said, 'Though thy wife hath a hundred faults, yet strike her not even with a blossom?' Jest not, my son, but tell me, whom doth Mandana's prince honour with his choice."

The rajah rose, and laying his hand gently on Harita's form, looked smilingly in his face: "Can you not guess, my friend; can you not even conjecture, that which your art should teach you? does thy knowledge of the future tell thee not, that she with the sweet name, the bright eye, and the pure lip, is thy own fair daughter, and that none else shall be Mandana's queen?—Nay, Harita, look not doubtingly upon me; seek not to put aside my will, for already have I considered all the arguments that you would use; but I tell thee 'tis in vain to combat my affection, and as thy friend and prince, I entreat thee let thy daughter be my wife."

A dark shade passed over the lately calm countenance of Harita, and for a moment his eye sought the ground in deep and earn-

est thought; but, as if decided on a subject requiring energy and firmness, he raised it quickly again to the beaming countenance of the rajah, and distinctly answered: "My lord, it may not be—seek some alliance more worthy thy growing power than that of the daughter of Eklinga's priest, for into thy harem can she never enter. My lord, you say well; by the stars have I read that thou shouldst love my child, but the same oracles forbid your union; be warned, and seek it not, for there is a mystery about the search I cannot dare to fathom."

"Mock me not, old man!" exclaimed the angry and excited prince; "mock me not. I ask thy daughter, and darest thou, with pretended auguries, cross the purpose of thy prince, or deny to the powerful Rajah of Mandana aught it may suit him to demand?"

"My lord the prince," replied the sage, with accents calm and soft, as if rather grieved, than in any way alarmed, at the menace of the rajah, "mighty as he is in all that is great or worthy, yet in this small thing he is powerless. My daughter, Jesswunt Singh, is the betrothed of one who has

loved her from her childish years; one to whom she also is devoted with the strong love of woman. That you have saved her life, my lord, is matter of deep gratitude to her, chiefly for this love she bears, for otherwise, my daughter has no weak heart, nor has she been taught to tremble at the fear of death; but to-morrow, being the Feast of Flowers, is appointed for the nuptials."

Quickly did the rajah turn from the calm and stately speaker, and, with dark brow and flashing eye, seek the open window, leaning against which, he communed with himself, and in a brief space, wrought for the future masses of dark evil, although yet indistinctly seen, and then he once more sought the priest, but it was with a placid mien and unknit front, inquiring, in accents strangely in discordance with his late excited tone: "Pardon me, my friend; you too may have also felt how keen is the pang of sudden disappointment; but tell me, who is he that claims the fair Vassanti?"

The tranquil air of the rajah surprised Harita; but, concluding that the fancy for his daughter had passed away before the conviction of its utter hopelessness, he re-

plied at once, candidly, and as if relieved from a position of much pain and difficulty, "The Rajah Kurna Singh, my lord, a chieftain of her mother's tribe."

"Ha!" exclaimed the prince, "I would none better: retire, Harita; our conference is ended."

The priest withdrew; and then it was that the violence of Jesswunt Singh burst forth. "Strange, that it should be none but *he*, my hated rival in the field, the chase, that should outstrip me here. Ever have I been warned that his star and mine are mysteriously united, and that strangely mingled are the fates of both. Pshaw! we are now, perhaps, equally great, and young, and well-beloved; but what is that? cannot my armies cast his forts into the dust, and my warriors lead captive all he can bring against them? It is enough that Kurna Singh has crossed my path, his life now lies in my dagger's sheath, and I will teach both him and this most arrogant priest what it is to defy the power of Jesswunt Singh."

There are some natures, and they are for the most part such as combine the power of strong physical excitement with deficiency of

self-control, and a haughty spirit defying circumstance, that are more acted upon by opposition than success, and such was that of the Rajah of Mandana. Previous to the spring-tide fête, the astonishing beauty, the high Rajpoot spirit, and the uncommon accomplishment of the only daughter of Eklinga's priest, were topics which, often discussed by the women of his family, fell yet indifferently on his ear, for Jesswunt Singh respected Harita far too highly to think lightly of his child, and marriage the rajah looked on only as a piece of political expediency, to be avoided as much as might be. When, however, with the chivalrous spirit of a Rajpoot warrior, he darted forth to save Vassanti, and received the fainting maiden in his arms, all that he had previously heard rushed upon his memory, and as he gazed on her fair high brow and graceful form, Jesswunt Singh felt, for the first time, that he had seen the woman formed to teach him the strength of human love; but a love calm and gentle as the summer lake, for as yet was no cloud upon its surface. But, when he learnt that she whom alone he had ever sought to share his power, the flower of her land,

was about to become the bride of a detested rival,—at once that love became like the dark and turgid mountain stream, casting before it all that would oppose its way,—and by his sword and shield, the most sacred oath of a Rajpoot warrior, did Jesswunt Singh swear to destroy the prince whose happiness opposed his own, and to bear away his bride in triumph.

It was a lovely spot, that which we now describe as lying at the foot of Kishengurh, and perhaps the rich sunset, which gilds all Eastern scenes with a beauty peculiarly its own, may have rendered even this more charming in casting fine orange tints upon the towering hills that closed it in, covered to their summits with the bright coriander, and other flowering shrubs that are the especial favourites of the gods of Ind, and gleaming also through the groves of mango and bamboo that surrounded the Golab Sagur, or rose-water lake, whose still waters reflected one of the most beautiful fanes to be found in the whole of Rajpootana, being erected in honour of Isani, the goddess of abundance.

At the time of which I write, the glowing sky was without a cloud, and the marble piazzas of the temple were surrounded by a group so picturesque in attire, and graceful in their bearing, that, but for the darkness of complexion among those who formed it, and the character of the fane near which they stood, it might have been rather taken for a band of actors in the school of Æschylus, than that for what it really was, a party of the *Charuns*, or poets of Rajpootana. The men were clad in flowing robes, white as snow, and of the finest texture, with turbans of the same around their noble-looking brows, from which depended garlands of mogree blossoms. Around the neck of each were massive necklaces of gold, a jewel dropping from the centre of the chain, and the gestures of all were full of the dignity which attached to their peculiar calling. There were women, too, among the group, attired in garments of dark colour, with rich gems and gold twined in the glossy braids of their abundant tresses, and golden bells encircling, as a zone, the slender waist of each. Around the grove, under the shade of which the Charuns stood, coloured lamps, with

bright garlands suspended from the trees, announced some reason for rejoicing, while, if more proof was wanting, it might be found in the bright eyes and smiling lips of those who watched the portal of the temple. Forth she came, the beautiful Vassanti, and by her side the Rajah Kurna Singh, both radiant in youth and happiness, and as they moved on, Lal Bae, the ruby-checked, stepped forth from the group of fair Charunis, and placed upon Vassanti's brow a blooming wreath, while the *naique*, or leader, of the Charun band, repeated, with slow and melodious voice, verses in honour of her own skill in poetic art, and the Charunis, linking together scarfs of blue and silver, elevated them as a canopy over Vassanti and the chief of Kishengurh. Kurna, smiling on the group, well pleased with this homage to the talents and beauty of his charming bride, cast towards the naique a silken fillet in proof of his royal favour; but as the Charun stooped to raise it, a strange, distorted figure skipped from behind the temple, his body smeared with ashes, a necklace of lotus-seeds around his neck, and with huge ears weighed down with circular pieces of metal, placed in

the incisions made for their reception. Yet, hideous as the split-eared ascetic might seem to those who had not reverence for his order, his appearance produced no terror amongst the group where he now stood, but, on the contrary, the Queen Vassanti hastily approached him, kindly inquiring "What now, Bal-Nathjee, come you from Mandana?"

"Daughter of the wise Harita," replied the jogee, "even so, and I have travelled far and fast through deep jungles and over desert plains to warn thee of the coming danger. The Rajah Jesswunt Singh has marched his army on the fort of Nagore, and ere to-morrow's eve it will fall before him; then will he hasten to Govindghur, and, after subduing the handful of surprised warriors who now hold it, will he come hither, lady, for he has sworn to destroy thy noble husband, and win thee as his bride."

Kurna Singh started, and laid his hand upon his sword; but Vassanti, casting herself into his arms, exclaimed, "Be not disturbed, my lord, our retainers are few, for we looked for peace, not war; but their faithful hearts will yet serve to throw a rampart

around their lord, that even Jesswunt Singh will not dare to force."

In the harem of the palace of Kishengurh, now silent in its mirth, stood Kurna Singh, his arm tenderly cast around his lovely bride, his sword and shield lying on the ground beside him, and, a few paces behind, seated on a deer-skin, was Bal-Nathjee, the ascetic.

"Dearest!" whispered Kurna Singh, "is it not hard to leave thee thus, so lately mine? Could nothing satisfy the cruel Jesswunt, but he must cast his eyes on thee, my betrothed wife, my sweet Vassanti? Oh! ten times had it been better for thee to have perished beneath the hoofs of the infuriated animals from which he saved thee, than to be the prey of this more savage chief."

Vassanti gazed upon her lord, and a tear of mingled love and pride hung on the fringe of her dark eye. "Kurna! what words are these? why this despair? believe you not that Vassanti's undying faith to thee is stronger than ten thousand conquerors? But speak, Bal-Nathjee; what says my father? nay, tell me his very words."

"Thus saith my master," replied the ascetic, slowly rising from the deer-skin: "Victory and fame to Kurna Singh; for to die well is to live for ever—let the chief of Kishengurh hasten to meet the Rajah of Mandana, and let the Queen Vassanti, closing the gates, await as a Rajpoot woman the result"—the jogee paused, and bent his eyes upon the ground.

"Said he no more than this?" eagerly inquired Vassanti; "said he nothing of the future?"

"Lady, why urge me thus? Harita said, 'Be comforted, for he who dies in battle will light his enemy through the shades of death to the mansions of Yama!'"

"Ha?" exclaimed Vassanti, "I feel, I feel, that this is no common parting; but go, beloved Kurna; haste thee to arm. All is unstable; there is no aid but in thy soul of manliness, and in thy sword; yet bow not thy head, and the purity of thy race will shine resplendent yet; for if thou fallest, remember! thy wife survives thee not."

Vassanti cast herself upon her husband's breast, and Bal-Nathjee, trained as he was

to indifference to all human passion, looked upon the grief of that young pair, so brave and so devoted, and thus gazing, nature conquered: he, the ascetic, turned aside his face and wept!

But the Rajpoot chief quickly tore himself from the clinging arms of his heroic wife, and the jogee prepared to follow him from the harem; but, as he did so, Vassanti, springing to his side, snatched a bracelet from her arm, and, in a voice half-stifled by emotion, whispered: "Bal-Nathjee, thou art my own, my father's friend—if the lord of my life fall under this destroyer's sword, fail me not, but send again this trinket as the sign, and—if but a hair of my dear father's beard is touched, if Jesswunt Singh dares to insult his reverend teacher, then wreath the bauble with mogree blossoms, such as you use in sacrifice, for it will be a type of one well pleasing to the gods." Before the fire of her now flashing eyes the jogee lowly bent, and folding the bracelet in his girdle, turned and left the harem, while Vassanti, with heavy tears rolling over her fair cheek, stood with inclined head and folded arms,

gazing on the spot from which the chief so late had parted.

Days passed. Beneath the walls of Kishengurh was now assembled a mighty host, whose tents were pitched beside the rapid stream that washed the city wall. The fort was strong, however, and the men-at-arms who manned its bastions, although mercenaries, Sindees and Cutchees, archers and matchlock-men, were well content to die in its defence. Daily, however, their water and provisions seriously decreased, for the siege was unprepared for, and the bravest hearts are helpless in the power of *circumstance*. Still as each eye waxed more dull, each cheek more pallid, the bright glance of hopeful encouragement cast on her defenders by the Rajpoot queen nerved all to fresh endurance.

The noon had deepened into twilight, the twilight was darkening into night, and the stars, with their mild radiance, were striving, as it were, wholly to eclipse the lingering rays of sunset, when alone, with a brow of thought, and doubting pangs that her young heart should ne'er have known, sat Vassanti

by the open window of the harem, her dark eye falling, indeed, upon the army of her foe and the banner of the prince sworn to the destruction of her house, but her thoughts were far away, and rested upon Kurna, the husband of her early love. Suddenly, a hissing sound, as of something rushing rapidly through the air, struck upon her ear, and in less than a second more, an arrow fell by her side, weighted with some heavy substance. With a beating heart, Vassanti raised it from the ground, and with dilated eyes gazed upon her bracelet, not alone, alas! wreathed with mogree blossoms, but those blossoms stained with blood. As she raised the fatal token, a scroll dropped therefrom, and on it were traced these words: "Govindghur is desolate—in its defence its heroes fell—of the house of Kurna none remain!"

Vassanti read; yet not a tear moistened the eye of the brave Rajpootnee, for now doubt was at an end, and fate had done its worst. Rising from her seat, she sought the portcullis of the fort, and seeing there the captain of the guard, addressed him thus: "Umra, at to-morrow's dawn, cast open the gates of Kishengurh to the Rajah Jesswunt

Singh, without condition; our people are exhausted, and thy prince demands that you obey me."

In the hall of the palace of Kishengurh reclined the victorious Jesswunt, anxiously awaiting the return of the messenger whom he had despatched to the Queen Vassanti, bearing the coco-nut, or marriage symbol, and with many protestations of a love overcoming all things, beseeching her to forget the past, and to reign over his heart and country. The rajah's countenance beamed with joy and triumph, for in this, as in all else, did he trace the auspicious aspect of his destiny, the fulfilment of all that had been foretold, and these gratulatory thoughts occupied him until the messenger's return, who came gladly, and as one only of a brilliant group, laden with the jewels of the house of Kurna, rich brocades, and shawls of inestimable value. Presenting these, the messenger thus addressed the impatient yet delighted prince: "My lord, the Queen Vassanti yields to thy wishes and greets thee well; she bids me say, that the bravery and power of Mandana's prince, meriting all

homage, have won the admiration of the queen, as a Rajpoot woman, great even as the ruin they have brought upon her house; thus she accepts thy clemency, and by the hands of these her servants sends this embroidered robe, this turban with jewelled aigrette, this scarf wrought with the royal arms, in gems of rarest value, which she prays thee now to put on, in preparation for the marriage-feast. The queen, however, adds, that, devoted long to grief and war, she craves a few hours in which to prepare herself and damsels for the nuptials, and does beseech my lord to grant her this request."

"Back! back!" exclaimed the now triumphant rajah, "and tell the Queen Vassanti, that all that Jesswunt Singh has wrought, being only for her love, he ever is her slave, and waits her pleasure to set a crown of joy upon his brow. To each of the queen's servants let a caparisoned elephant be given, with arms and a dress of honour; proclaim that all within the fort are free, and that to-day will a feast be held in celebration of our nuptials, and now—send hither my opium-bearer; I must while away the lingering hours, until the queen commands me to her presence."

The *umul* (opiate) did its work, and the prince, lulled also by the soft music of a bard, seemed in his dreams of future happiness to forget the burning ambition, the cruel wrong, the blood-stained horrors of the past, or to remember them, if at all, only as the fortunate means that insured him the bright promise of his now fulfilled hopes; and when the song of joy burst forth from the inner apartments of the palace, he awaited no other summons, but, springing from the pile of cushions which formed his couch, he hurried rapidly forward until arrested by the immediate presence of the marriage-group.

On a broad terrace of pure white marble, covered with rich carpets of the finest Persian looms, and reclining on a cushion of pale blue velvet, embroidered in seed pearl, appeared Vassanti, surrounded by her maidens; a muslin robe of the softest texture, and starred with gold, swept around her graceful form, and on the raven braids of her luxuriant hair rested the *burmala*, or marriage-wreath; but this alone bore marks of hasty preparation, for here and there the mogree blossoms had a withered tinge, and a colour less pure than if freshly gathered;

yet it mattered little, for none glanced again upon the garland whose eye had once looked upon the fair face that beamed forth beauty from beneath it, and Jesswunt Singh, as he now advanced towards her, thought how infinitely more lovely was Harita's daughter than he had ever before imagined, for her eye, no longer soft and calm, flashed beneath its shading fringes, like a diamond in its dark mine, and her soft cheek, no longer palely transparent, was rich in colour as the folded leaves of a young rosebud. Seating himself then by Vassanti's side, the rajah sought to express the love which had hurried him to deeds for which he craved her pardon, by right of the expiation that he made in offering her his throne, with the will to become for life her vassal, and the queen apparently listened to his earnest words, yet from time to time, with stealthy care, she raised her downcast eyes, and furtively their glances seemed to wander, as if in search of somewhat. At length, a certain restlessness attracted even the attention of the rajah, who paused, gazing attentively upon her, but as he did so, a slight tremor passed over her frame, her lip grew blanched, and, half-rising

from her cushions, she gazed with dilated eye towards the entrance to the terrace; the eye of Jesswunt Singh rapidly followed the direction of hers, but nothing met his view except a jogee, who, having that moment entered, was spreading his deer-skin upon the marble. The strange agitation of the queen, however, alarmed the rajah; he rose hurriedly, his brow flushing, and his pulse throbbing with excitement; but he, too, seems now to share the wild emotion; his eyes glare wildly, a sudden heat oppresses him, he calls loudly for his cup-bearer, and flinging to the ground his jewelled turban, which seemed like a band of fire on his brow, rushes towards the sculptured parapet of the terrace, as if even the sight of the deep water that flowed below could stay the raging thirst, or cool the fevered heat, that now consume him.

Vassanti presses her hand upon her brow; following the prince, a deeper flush dyes her cheek, a brighter fire gleams from her eye; she glances towards Bal-Nathjee, and as she does so, lifts her hand to heaven; then, turning to the rajah, and raising to his trembling

lip and pallid cheek the eye which had never before met his, she thus addressed him :—

"Prince! you once saved the life of Harita's daughter, and she was grateful. But, as a mighty torrent sweeps away the fair flowers whose beauty would long enamel the green margin of a placid stream, so have thy crimes swept away the trace of all gentler things. My father and my husband, murdered by thy hand, my fortress and my faithful friends within thy grasp, one only course remained worthy of a Rajpoot woman. The marriage robe thou wearest, the turban thou hast cast aside, were charged with a subtile poison. Your last hour is come; the star of your destiny has set, and as the house of Kurna is, so shalt thine be—desolate."

She paused; then, detaching from her glossy tresses the mogree wreath, she placed it on the burning brow of the now writhing prince. "Yes, Jesswunt," she continued, "none now can save thee; yet murmur not, the *burmala* dyed with my father's blood crowns your brow, and you hasten, a devoted sacrifice, to the presence of the assembled

gods; but even there shalt thou meet with thine accuser."

Vassanti turns; she waves her arms in mournful farewell towards her maidens; the ascetic, with a loud cry, rushes towards her; but in vain. Animated by the heroic spirit of her race, she springs from the sculptured parapet, and the deep waters of the sparkling stream receive her fair and unpolluted form, faithful in death to all she loved whilst living.

Near the beautiful temple of Eklinga are three time-stained marble slabs, supported by the aged trunks of some fine peepul-trees. They are sculptured, somewhat rudely, perhaps, with the monumental symbols used by the Rajpoot people: a warrior mounted, and fully armed; a female hand telling of self-destruction, and an open book, denoting the priestly office; wild flowers spring around, and 'tis said, that no noisome thing dares approach a triad, sacred to wisdom, bravery, and love.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADEN, WITH THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.

THE position of Aden must render it a spot of continual and increasing importance to the civilized world; and lying as it does, in the road of the Eastern voyage, there are few persons who do not desire to know something of its general characteristics. It has been my fate to admire its beauties and to grumble over its stony roads more than once; yet it is impossible to remember it without pleasure, or to consider it without interest.

My last visit to Aden was made in returning from India a few months since; and, as it is a point of occupation continually progressing, the latest news of it must ever be the best.

It is agreeable to arrive at Aden by daylight; for the entrance of the harbour is particularly beautiful and picturesque, while pleasant glimpses are to be caught of the

adjacent island of Syra, of the British camp, and other objects of interest; yet we were unfortunate in making it when evening had darkened round its rocks, and the stars shone upon the waters; but, although we were thus tantalized by remaining hours in anxious expectation of the dawn, which would set us actively at work, our good steam-ship, the *Cleopatra*, was not so to play the idler, but being at anchor soon after midnight, was joined immediately by the coal-charger, and began making herself useful and disagreeable.

Aden, since I had seen it in 1839, was much improved, and this I at once discovered as soon as it was light enough to drink a cup of coffee, blackened with coal-dust, or to peer from out the film gathered on one's eyelashes during the early morning hours. The Political Agent's house, near Steamer Point, had been newly built, and a commodious-looking travellers' bungalow was in process of erection, as a matter of speculation, by an energetic Parsee—one of a class who, having no religious tenets to oppose them, are the great innkeepers all over India, rendering themselves famous for producing good dinners and high charges,

matters that are too often synonymous, whether one's host wears a turban or a hat. However, this inn is a convenience particularly required; for so very unpleasant is the necessary operation of coaling on board a steamer, with the thermometer at 104, that no one who could possibly avoid it would remain a moment on deck after the ceremony had commenced; but hitherto, unless persons brought introductions to the camp, or possessed acquaintances there, on hospitable thoughts intent, they were condemned, for four-and-twenty hours, to eat, drink, breathe, and be attired in, coal-dust; for decks, faces, garments, and edibles, all take the universal hue. There is also a great deal of a beautiful and highly-interesting nature to be observed at Aden; and these inducements should be enough to lead every voyager to quit the steamer as soon as she has anchored, and with sketch-book or hammer in hand, as his artistical or geological taste may lead, prepare to climb the rocks of Aden, or wander admiringly along the sands of its bright and beautiful bays, where the peculiarly blue waters, the dark towering rocks, the lovely varieties of shells, and ma-

rine esculents of every kind, will afford hours of delight and gratification, of which the voyager should immediately avail himself; for the scenery of Aden is by no means common. Nor, during the rest of his voyage, will the passage of the Red Sea, interesting and beautiful as the coast is, present similar opportunities; for, in keeping a middle course, the shells, the rocks, the coral reefs, eulogized so highly by those who, in native crafts, seek the great emporiums of its shores, remain unseen in their ocean beds, and are but to be guessed at by the snow-like wreaths which the telescope reveals, as flung upon the distant shore.

The Island of Aden is entirely volcanic, and remarkable for the great beauty of its bay and harbour. It is about thirteen miles in circumference, and the greatest breadth perhaps four. The appearance of Aden is that of a group of black, calcined, ashy-looking hills, most varied in their forms, and rising to the height of one thousand or twelve hundred feet. Few features in scenery can be more remarkable than these Aden hills; thrown up originally by some great volcanic force, they have taken and

retained forms the most peculiar and picturesque. The summits of one group have shot up in a hundred tapered spires—their needle-like points contrasted and thrown out in bold relief by the fine azure of the sky; while others present the perfect effect of crumbling ruins, castellated remains, half-broken walls, and the most wild and jagged outlines, which the imagination may class as among the relics of a people whose influence and power have long passed from Aden.

The camp, situated about five miles from the anchorage of Aden, is always a point of curiosity and interest, while, in addition to this, the coast scenery, with the rugged hills, stony gorges, and waterless beds of rivers, which form the chief characteristics of the interior, are all abundantly worth the trouble of an excursion thence, which is easily effected by means of some of the numerous donkeys, ponies, and camels, which are brought down to Steamer Point, on the arrival of every steamer, and let for hire by Arab boys, who have learnt a little English and a great deal of suspicion and cunning during our occupation of Aden; one rupee, or two shillings, is the charge of a camel or

donkey's journey to and from the British camp; and it is commonly insisted that this sum shall be paid in advance; but, if accorded, the visitor is quite sure to find that, as soon as practicable after he dismounts, at his destination, his means of return are to be sought afresh, the donkey or camel boy having flitted with his half-earned gains.

The road from Steamer Point to the camp at Aden is good, and the traveller finds no obstacle to his advance, although appearances at starting would bring with them a contrary conclusion. About one mile and a quarter from Steamer Point a black precipitous promontory juts out into the sea, but is fortunately cut through by a chasm which the road traverses, and which requires cautious riding. Descending by a steep way, the road skirts along a fine open bay, bright and intensely blue, with smooth hard sands, and rocks perforated with numerous caves filled with white foam dashing amongst the rugged stones scattered at their mouths. From the appearance of the plain, this bay would seem to have traversed much farther than the present boundary of its waters, even to the base of the lofty hills which here rise

to about eighteen hundred feet above the level of the sea. At the end of this road a tremendous barrier seems to cut off future progress. On advance, however, it is found pierced through with a tolerable road, which, winding upwards by a steep ascent, leads to a fortified wall and gate, sentinelled by British troops. Passing through what is in fact but a mere crack or cleft in the gigantic rock, a steep descent, crossed apparently by great numbers of dykes and watercourses, ends abruptly on a wide and barren plain—a basin, amid rocky hills, where stands, with its array of batteries, tents, and old stone houses, the looked-for Aden. Altogether, this is the most sterile place imaginable; not a blade of grass, not a spray or shrub, is to be seen; and one poor, half-withered, forlorn mimosa-tree, which is talked of as existing in a rocky ravine, I believe, myself, to have no being but in legendary lore.

The native town of Aden is composed of small stone houses, the materials of which are piled together without any pretence of cement, and they are wretched in the extreme. The population is estimated at four thousand, being composed of Simalees, Arabs,

and Jews. The former, who are fishermen, are said to be still attached to the Sabean worship; and the latter possess a synagogue in the town, with some copies of the Old Testament in detached parts. During my previous visit to Aden, Mr. Samuels, the missionary, was engaged in an ostensible endeavour to ameliorate the condition of the Jews of Aden, and of Arabia generally; but I am not acquainted with the results of his labours. They are at present a very miserable race, but useful to us notwithstanding; as, of all the classes at Aden, the Jews were found the only people who would work for government, or exchange their labour for an equivalent. Possibly, the fact of the poverty which marks the condition of the native population of Aden may account for the toleration which prevails among people so essentially opposed to each other in their religious tenets, and commonly so virulent in mutual hatred; but here, Jews, Mahomedans, and Pagans, meet together in the coffee-shops, and discuss the interests of the time in perfect amity. The wants of an Eastern people are always few, and commonly restricted to the mere necessaries of

an animal existence, with the simplest clothing. Much labour is not required to command these; consequently the Jew of Aden lives well on the hire of the labour he may perform at intervals for his British employer; the Simalee on the produce of his fishing-net; and the indolent Arab, who will do nothing but bask in the sun, exists as he may, on a cup of coffee given in charity, or fish cast aside by the Simalee, with oysters broken from the rocks.

Three hundred years ago Aden was a possession of the Turks: from them it was seized by the Arabs, and, previous to its occupation by the British, both powers enjoyed at intervals its command. The valuable position of Aden rendered it always an object of feud and warfare; the fiercest tribes shed their blood freely for its possession. Mahomed Ali eagerly desired it, and the British have found it difficult to hold, but they have done so bravely; and the Sultan of Yemen and the Fouthelee tribe are growing weary and dispirited. It is a strange warfare that of the Arabs; and, if time is allowed, the visitor at Aden would do well to climb one of the hills opposite the camp,

and so command a perfect view of the isthmus, which at low water connects it with the main land of the Turkish wall, and of the numerous and wildly-situated look-out posts sentinelled by our troops. From this point may be seen the rocks, the sands, the jutting rugged angles, along which, in twos and threes at intervals, the Arabs made their way, now climbing scarps apparently impracticable even for the footing of a chamois, then wading through swampy sands, now crouching behind rocky promontories to avoid the watchman's eye; and then, their swords between their teeth, swimming strongly against a current. Thus came on, despite of guards and sentinels, our Arab enemies, collecting by degrees, favoured by habit, by courage, by the natural features of the country they knew so well, a force collected by degrees, lying perdue in small parties, until, at the appointed time, with wild and savage yells, they fearlessly burst down upon our breastworks, and tried the strength of British steel.

Estimates have been sent in to Government, stating that twenty-eight thousand pounds are necessary to meet the expense

of properly fortifying Aden. The reason of this expenditure being required is said to be the fact of all the lime used in building coming from Mocha; but, to judge from the tanks and towers which now remain of ancient erection, the Turks seem to have found that a species of red chalk, with the volcanic matter of the hills, or a fine gravel found in the watercourses, made a very perfect cement. The walls of Aden are connected at very short intervals by numerous towers of Turkish erection, which are built of large flat stones, and loopholed, a style of architecture quite unknown at present amongst the people of the country.

The productions of Aden are principally gums, spices, senna, and coffee; but the exports are very inconsiderable, in consequence of the trade being retained by Mocha, as a result of the yet unsettled character of the Aden government. Fish is procurable in immense quantities, but it is usually of an inferior kind, and neither fruit nor vegetables are procurable. In the interior, however, game of various and fine kinds attract the sportsmen; and great praise was bestowed on grapes, for which we were too

late, but which in August and September are said to be procurable in abundance. A stroll among the sands is one of the most delightful recreations at Aden; and at every step the eye is attracted by beautiful shells shrouding the living fish, bright-coloured sponges, singular groups of coral, the huge hermit crabs prosecuting their long journeys, and shining pebbles of the most brilliant hues, while the smaller rocks are crusted with oysters, found in masses close to the shore, connected by the labours of the coral species. The fish is small but well-flavoured, and the interior of the shell is ridged with a lovely purple tint, softening to the faintest rose colour. Nor does the interest of this beautiful bay end with the close of evening, for then are its shores covered with glow-worms, and the sea becomes radiant with phosphoric matter. The variety of dolphins and sharks at Aden are said to be greater than elsewhere, yet the latter are never found dangerous to bathers. The climate of Aden may be considered good, for although the heat is very considerable, from the absence of rain and the volcanic character of the soil, yet disease is rare and little

complained of, except occasional rheumatism, incurred by exposure to night air and heavy dew. As a proof of the healthiness of Aden, it is worthy remark, that in October, the most trying month in India, we found the head-quarters of H. M. 17th and the whole of the 10th N.I. stationed there, and of the former, consisting of five hundred men, only ten were in hospital.

The process of coaling is as tedious as it is disagreeable, but fortunately we had the poop of the charger, the old weather-beaten *Semiramis*, to sit on during the day, and I found considerable amusement in watching the strange grotesque dancing of the Simalees, who are employed in the work. These dusky importations from the eastern coast of Africa are a merry, fat, curly-headed race, who are employed for this particular work at twenty shillings a month each, but are only enabled to put forth their strength when excited by music and their national dance. In consequence of this peculiarity, tamborines are incessantly beaten on the deck of the vessel, which the Simalees accompany by clapping their hands and treading a grotesque measure, in most perfect

time. A group of Simalees being assembled on the deck of the steamer, near the open hold in which are deposited the bags of coal, with a crane and pulley above it, the rope attached is lowered, and the hook fastened to a bag. Meanwhile the Simalees, with a loud song, chanted to the tune of the tamborines, run towards the forecastle, and return dancing in line in the most grotesque way that can be imagined, clapping their hands, raising one to the ear, and then with a kind of curtseying movement turning slowly round, with one leg bent and raised from the ground, changing the foot at intervals: the movements completed, they with one accord seize the rope, and rush merrily back, raising the coal-bag as they go. Such is the wild excitement of this labour, so conducted, that the captain of the charger assured me that they commonly lost four men after each coaling, and calculated that in putting on board every hundred ton of coals the sacrifice was of one man. The labour effected is immense, and this solely without any stimulant but that of music and the wild dance of their native shores. We were also amused by the feats

of the divers. Several lads, who had been left in charge of small private boats, by gentlemen who were visiting friends on board our steamer, seemed to consider themselves particularly fulfilling their duties by springing into the water, gamboling about in all sorts of strange attitudes, and suddenly disappearing altogether. They clambered on board every native craft that passed them, and then, throwing a summerset, plunged again into the water, laughing and shouting with delight. These lads were Simalees also, and had dyed their curly hair a bright red with a mixture of chunam, a favourite piece of coxcombry among the Simalee dandies, who frequently shave their heads, and place on them red wigs, formed of the long wool of the Abyssinian sheep. Nothing can be imagined more ludicrous than the effect of this hanging round the black, merry, but hideously-featured wearer.

On the evening following our arrival we sailed from Aden, almost choked with coal-dust, surrounded by indescribable confusion, and with faces fit only for the Tartarean regions, yet bearing with us the impression that Aden was in a state of rapid progres-

sion, socially and politically. We had seen Parsee shops, having goods little advanced in price to those in Bombay, open in the bazaar. We had seen an inn in process of erection. We had heard Arab boys speak English, and had been cheated by them. We had purchased ginger-beer on Steamer Point; and nothing, therefore, seemed wanting to complete the civilization of Aden, according to the rule for discerning it given by some travellers, except a gibbet and a turnpike; but Arabs avoid the first, by perpetrating only state offences, and no one is yet misanthropical enough to keep the second.

On the noon of the day following that of our leaving Aden we made the Straits of Babel-el-Mandeb, passing between the main land on our right and the Island of Perim on our left. The wind always freshens at this point, blowing strongly down through the Gate of Tears, and rendering it difficult for the eighteen chickens which appear at dinner to be retained in their respective dishes. The whole of this shore and its islands are of the same volcanic character as Aden, and of the latter none can be inhabited, from a total want of fresh water.

Fishermen sometimes cross to them from the main land, and their bays and rocks are very beautiful, but all are bare, sterile, and of the same unvarying ashy hue. Our next interesting point was Mocha, the great emporium of Eastern trade. As seen through a telescope, the town appears to be built of fine white stone, with square houses and flat roofs, relieved by numerous minarets. It is erected close to the sea, and, from its geographical position, is eminently fitted for the purposes of commerce. The best houses in Mocha are built of the coral rock which abounds along the coast of the Red Sea, and others, like the Sindhian and Central Asian houses, of unburnt brick, washed with chunam or lime cement, which gives to them a white, shining, marble-like effect.

The character of the coast renders it impracticable for the approach of large vessels, and the commerce is entirely carried on by means of the strong native craft, the Arab dows, and buggalows. As may be easily supposed in a place characterized by an extensive trade, the natives of many lands may be met in the bazaar of Mocha, where the Turk, with his keen sword and tasselled fez; the Bedouin, with bright eye and cloak of

goat's hair; the swarthy Abyssinian, the Jew, Hindoo, and Arab, mix amicably for the purposes of trade or of convenience, forgetting, for self-interest, the motives and the tenets which elsewhere render hostility so mutual. Mocha has long been the principal port of Arabia Felix. It is under the chief of Sennaar, and its exports are valuable, including, in addition to the articles of commerce usual in the East, grapes of a remarkably fine kind, equal in quality to its tobacco and coffee. The shining white town of Mocha is relieved by a mountain range, which extends along the whole of the Red Sea, bounding an arid plain intervening between it and the town. The wall of Mocha has bastions, and loopholes for defence, which from a distance gives it rather a formidable appearance, but, like the towns of India, a nearer view induces the visitor to change his opinion, and become satisfied of their extreme frailty, or, as some one says, that six warriors, armed with thick shoes, could at once make a breach in its battlements.

Those who desired to follow the steps of Crusoe or Selkirk in rendering themselves independent of the conveniences of civilized

life, or the aid of their fellow-men, might have made their selection of a residence easily at this point; for a few hours' steaming from Mocha brought us abreast of Harnish and Zibbel Zoogun, with the clustered Isles of Zibayer; and soon after with the single elevation of Zibbel Teer. All are equally bare and volcanic, but the latter, about five years since, at the period of the survey made by Captains Moresby and Carless, had a burning crater, which still occasionally smokes.

We shortly arrived off Jidda, and the heat considerable, the thermometer standing at 92° of Fahrenheit in the cuddy. The glare of the sun, too, had been painfully felt on deck for the last three days, and a consequent transportation of children, nurses, and Surat toys took place, by no means tending to render the saloon more agreeable to the student. But all this, and much worse, must be endured in the homeward trip, which the return passenger is wholly free from. For myself, I could not have imagined a contrast so great as that presented by the circumstances of my present voyage, and that which I had made from Suez three

years since; but the reasons of the difference were as obvious as the facts were disagreeable.

Jidda is very superior to Mocha in appearance, but is particularly interesting as the point of the pilgrims' debarkation on their way to Mecca. Caravans generally leave Cairo for Jidda in December, when crowds of believers may be seen travelling together for mutual protection. When I was last at Suez, the sands for miles were covered with gay tents of green and crimson cloth, surmounted with the ensign of the crescent, belonging to rich Moslems, on their way to the Holy City of the Prophet; but it is said that this journey is less popular than of old, and that rich men now frequently employ hired servants to perform for them the Haj —a very Catholic notion this of purchasing eternal benefits, and the spirit of the thing a good deal resembling that which must have governed Monsieur Chateaubriand's notion of a pilgrimage, when he begged a friend to go from Paris to Alexandria to inscribe his name for him on Diocletian's Column (*vulgò* Pompey's Pillar). The trade with Jidda is enormous, being calculated at £1,000,000

per annum. From Egypt to Jidda the export is principally in grain, from which Mehemet Ali derives a large revenue.

From this point little is seen of interest, until the Straits of Jubal are gained, for the Emerald Mountains, which intervene on the right of the course, can scarcely be considered so, long since rifled, as they have been, and exhausted of their treasures. The Pasha incurred some expense in the endeavour to prove it otherwise, but the failure was complete.

On either side of the Straits the scenery is of the most interesting and beautiful character, and a day's onward voyage brings Mount Sinai, with all its sublime and stirring associations, in view. On the right of the course it towers, a distinct and separate peak, rising from the second of mountain ranges, extending along the Gulf of Suez. Nothing is seen of it beyond the summit; but whether Mount Sinai is, or is not, the particular spot from whence the great law was delivered to the sons and daughters of Israel, we know it to be one of the chain sacred to the memory of every believer in the Jewish dispensation; to have been, from

the earliest ages, the object of veneration to the pious, and the point of pilgrimage to the religious traveller in the East; that, in every age, men believing implicitly in its historical truth have laboriously reached its summit, and, gazing around upon the neighbouring mountains and upon the plains beneath, have felt, with all the humility of full belief, and with all the enthusiasm of pure excitement, that here, indeed, did Jehovah appear, to reveal his will to the multitudes he had chosen to serve him; that here man was brought face to face with his Maker, and that the cloud which rested on the Mount, the voice which was borne upon the wings of the air to the thronging multitudes of Israel's hosts, the tablets of stone, and the inscriptions written thereon, were things as true, as much to be felt, and heard, and seen, in those days of wonder and of awe, as the eternal hill, and the murmuring of the distant sea, are to the traveller of the present. And, surely, these memories are enough to invest the towering peak of Sinai with all the sublime grandeur of the past—to know it as the spot which, for successive ages, has called forth the deepest veneration of Jew,

and Monk, and Christian, of the man of piety and of the man of learning—is surely enough to make us cling to the belief that this was, indeed, the Mount of God, the chosen spot for the revelation of His will. The peak of Sinai towers majestically bare above its companions of the neighbouring range; the beams of the rising sun tinge its summit; the sandy gorges of the hills beneath are untrodden even by the mountain goat, and, but for the curling foam upon the pebbly shore, all is silent, calm, and still: yet little imagination is enough to people these vast solitudes with the wondrous features of the past, with the thousands of the chosen released from the house of bondage, with their wives and their little ones, all laden with the spoil of their Egyptian masters, and following their great high priest with faith and strong purpose. The gold and silver ornaments seem to glitter in the sun, even the ornaments which were made the occasion of sin by an impatient and excited people; the gorges and ravines seem crowded by a wearied train, and the camels bow beneath their burdens; but a few hours more and they will rest; and soon, like these,

the favoured of Israel's sons, we may, by fancy's aid, imagine the great scene which to them was a reality of the time, when all the people lifted up their eyes, and "saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpets, and the mountain smoking," and even "the thick darkness where God was." There is something in all this so awe-inspiring and so exciting, that we cling fondly to the belief that this very peak was indeed the spot so hallowed, and, as the ship hurries on her course, we turn again and again, that our eyes may rest on Sinai, the great natural monument identified with the governing principles of every Christian's daily life.

Sinai is about ~~fifteen~~ six camel-days' journey from Suez, and the road, although sandy, is good. The Convent of St. Katherine affords rest to the traveller, and the monks are gratified by the visits of strangers. Nothing can be more lovely than the mountain ranges above Sinai: we passed them about sunrise, and never wearied of admiring their curious forms, the lights and shadows cast upon them, and the lovely colourings which, sometimes darkly blue, were again toned down to

the softest lilacs, bordered by vivid yellows. Here and there a sand-bank stretched out, which seemed in the distance covered with bright verdure, round which coral reefs flung up the dancing foam in sparkling wreaths beneath the sunbeams. And thus continued the character of the scene until we made Suez, and ended our passage of the Red Sea, which, on paper, proves not, I trust, more tedious than were its experiences to the recording voyager.

A DAY AT SYRACUSE.

We arrived at Syracuse in the middle of January, having made the passage in a Neapolitan boat, the *Ercolano*, from Malta, which was so remarkable for slow voyaging and bad dinners, that it required an Herculean labour of patience to put up with it; and the male helps, in the shape of a Signor Joseph, and his assistant, a Signor Carlotti, were so very Italianly filthy in all their appearance and habits, and combined so materially dirt with a sort of sentimental coxcombry, that it was not easy to relish the olives, figs, pickles, bad soup, and tough viands which, at the hours of ten and seven, made their diurnal appearance on the dirty table-cloth. We had a great many French passengers, a few English, and two or three Neapolitan, which last, when questioned about the

Sicilian government, the sulphur question, or the doings of King Ferdinand, looked suspiciously around them, and dropped their voices to a whisper.

It is impossible to form any idea of what the annoyances of police may become until that of the Sicilians has been known. The system of espionage is in all, and above all, and around all; at the table, in the theatre, by the confessional, sleeping or waking, in mirth or sorrow, the Sicilian trembles in the power of the watchmen of his government, while so corrupt are they, that the very highest will not disdain the bribe of a *carlini* (fourpence), although, while he pockets the temptation, he will at the same moment condemn and betray the tempter.

The weather was cold and bright, the sky above our heads clear and intensely blue, but in the distance appeared heavy masses of full round clouds, which promised a long continuance of the snow that had lately fallen in great quantities, and now lay deep upon the brow of Etna.

Unfortunately, although the flames from the mountain were still visible, I was too late to see it in its magnificent state of full

eruption, for this had taken place twenty days before, and the captain of our boat, a rough, half-Anglicised sort of Neapolitan, had directed, that as the *Ercolano* passed Etna at midnight, all his passengers should be called on deck, to witness its flaming crater cast forth huge stones and blackened lava, in the violent throes of its interior commotion; for which kind act some thanked him, but the greater number grumbled, in imitation of the mountain, at the interruption of their tranquil slumbers. I knew a simple *aubergiste* of Naples once who was wont to repair nightly to Vesuvius, during all its eruptions, and that too after a day of weary toil; but such love of the terrible and the sublime abode not with our friends of the *Ercolano*, and I have constantly observed, during my travels on the Continent, that although sentiment is the fashion, and moustached gens-d'armes, or even custom-house officers, will indulge in the most enthusiastic and tender rhapsodies on natural scenery, they would not practically desert a good dinner, a soft bed, or a *scena* at the Opera, for the finest effects that heaven or earth could shew them.

The base of Etna may be considered as a conglomerate of small mountains, each of which has made a noise in its time, but, with forgotten volcanoes and blackened craters, have now settled down in agricultural quiet, rich with corn-fields and vineyards, the latter producing some of the finest varieties of wine that are known.

The captain of the *Ercolano*, who, although a Neapolitan, was civil to the English, as a result of six weeks once spent in London, described to me the features of the late eruption, than which nothing finer can be imagined, such effects from Etna being far more sublime than any that have been seen from Vesuvius since the destruction of Pompeii. The thick smoke and showers of ashes which had appeared for days from Etna, succeeding the first throes that had warned the country of the approaching eruption, were followed by red-hot stones and huge rocks, cast forth with a projectile force almost incredible, their effect being rendered more sublime and awe-inspiring by the darkness of the sky, and the lake of fire that seemed to play around the mountain foot, as the huge stones fell hissing into the sea, that

reflected its crimson hue. Terribly magnificent must have been the sight, and the more so when connected with the associations of human fear and general destruction to which such effects must give rise. The stranger is surprised that people venture to reside in positions of such danger, and yet some charming villages stud the base of Etna, although blocked up with rugged lava. It must not be deemed, however, that awe of the mountain does not exist, although custom reconciles the peasants to its vicinity; for the Sicilians firmly believe Etna to be the mouth of Pluto's kingdom, and that the interior of the crater is occupied by the souls of the condemned, who may be seen tortured by his servants by all who choose to approach the edge. Whether the supposed vicinity of such neighbours produce an effect on the Catanians, I cannot decide, but those who live about the mountain are a fierce, bad class, worse than the rest of the Sicilians, which is saying as much ill of them as *can* be said. There was, I am glad to say, no tardy officer of health to detain us shivering on the deck of the packet after our arrival, but some prettily-painted Neapolitan boats came along-

side, and in one of them a white-haired, fair-faced old gentleman, whose appearance of health and good-humour promised well for his exertions as a cicerone, and so we bade him take us to the best inn. He fulfilled his instructions by introducing us up a narrow, dirty street, to a wretched *auberge*, the only one in Syracuse, a cold, desolate-looking place, more like a museum than a hostel, for the rooms had no other furniture than long tables and wooden chairs, while on every side were grouped plaster casts of the Laocoon and Antinous, Etruscan vases of varied form and ornament, with prints and models from Victor Hugo's "Notre Dame," which we found as popular in all the inns of Sicily, as those of "The Vicar of Wakefield" usually are in the village inns of merry England.

After the worst breakfast that ever traveller grew angry over, our cicerone appeared with a large donkey and a small horse, both saddled, and necessary, he said, for the journey round Syracuse. But the truth was, that our breakfast had put us so decidedly out of humour, that extortion was not to be borne, and when we asked and heard the

charges made by the worthy stable-keeper for the day's use of this pair of ugly animals, we stated our determination to have "none of them." And although the muleteer ran after us about a mile, every step demanding less, and then stood on a price that was not more than six times what was fair, we still determined to prosecute the way on foot, as the day was clear and cold, and the distance, we suspected, less than our cicerone could be induced to allow. The ancients said, that a day had never been known in which, during some part of it, the sun had not shone on Syracuse, and certainly on this day it favoured us remarkably.

The result of travelling in Sicily is, that it leaves one nothing to say in favour of the Sicilians; for they are the most imposing, deceiving, unconscientious people in the world, and to move safely among them, one must not only be suspectful of, but fully impressed with their proneness to evil; and even then, when meeting it, with the cool determination of being as wary as they are knowing, the traveller is a loser by one-half.

Syracuse, by the Greeks and Latins, was

called an island, but, happily, the strait that once separated it from the continent is filled up, and for a very long period it has been a peninsula,—a satisfactory matter to us, who were well tired of boating. I thought we should never have got through the fortifications, what with gates, glacis, covered ways, scarps, counterscarps, and draw-bridges; but we succeeded at last, and came to the open country, where the first portion of the ancient city presented itself to our view in the shape of a single column of the old forum of Ortygia, having still in its battered form all the beautiful simplicity of the antique. Here we turned to look back on the old walls that had defied the Roman fleet, and from which Archimedes and his engines "lifted their vessels out of the sea, and dashed them against the rocks." The ditches were filled with fishing-boats and gaily-painted yachts, with enormous figure-heads strangely adorned, with some Maltese "sparonaros," having six oars and great speed, but so weak and small, that I should be very sorry to venture in one on the capricious Mediterranean, whose storms I should fear more than the African pirates, whom this craft is intended to outstrip.

Walking on about a mile along a narrow road, lined with the walls of the ancient city, our cicerone brought us to the ruins of the amphitheatre, which is situated in the most lovely part of the island, its old stones garlanded with flowers, and dotted with moss and lichen.

The doors of entrance to the amphitheatre, both of the seats and the arena, yet remain, part being of masonry, and part hewn from the rock; a fine aqueduct, now filled up with shrubs and wild flowers, runs under the south entrance, and among them blocks of fine marble, sculptured and richly graven, but like all things now about the once mighty Syracuse, time-stained, broken, and defaced.

The view from this "Santi Theatre," as our old Sicilian guide called it, is extremely beautiful, embracing the fortified town of Syracuse, the fine harbour of the ancient "Marmonea" (which Diodorus tells us was surrounded with buildings of fine white marble), with the great mountain, rising equally from its immense base, and casting up amidst its snows inextinguishable fires—while nearer yet, were the rich meadows, corn-fields, and vineyards of the plains of

Syracuse, intersected by picturesque ruins, and at the time enlivened by numerous sportsmen with their dogs, for snipes are abundant in the low grounds during the cold season.

Turning from the amphitheatre, we came to the most beautiful part of all Syracuse, the noble stone-quarry known as the "Ear of Dionysius." This remarkable and beautiful place is hung with the most luxuriant trees and verdure, and surrounded by rocks of the most picturesque and fantastic shapes. Before we reached the gallery from the side entrance, the notes of a violin struck on our ears, and we found a Sicilian playing lively airs, for the purpose of giving effect to the very distinct echo produced by the form of the gallery; this is about a hundred and eighty feet long and fifty-nine feet high, the side walls sloping together, and the end perfectly dark. This remarkable gallery was the state prison of the tyrant of Syracuse, and all sound is, from the form of the excavation, directed to a common point, or tympanum, which is gained by a small apartment, in which Dionysius was accustomed to listen to the groans, lamentations, and frequent accusations probably, of his unhappy pri-

soners. We groped our way to the end of the gallery, and found all progress stayed by an upright wall, when, turning again to observe the general effect, a man fired some detonating balls at the farther end, which resounded as from a 36-pounder, and scarcely had the smoke cleared away, before the violin was again heard, and some pretty waltzes echoed through the prison, pleasanter sounds than ever greeted the ear of the tyrant, for truths are often disagreeable enough, and Dionysius must have heard many, from time to time, to have set his self-complacency on edge. We left the gallery, and outside the door met a stranger, sketch-book in hand, rapturously gazing on the view before him, but hopeless of consigning it to paper. Such aid as we could, we gave him; and after assuring him we understood our old cicerone perfectly, while he remained hopelessly in the dark as to the communications of his own, we went on to the common prison, a noble space, excavated like a cave-temple of the East, and supported by square, lofty pillars, crumbling in decay and garlanded with lichen, the broken rocks affording the most picturesque effects. The sur-

face of the stone was stained partially a bright rose colour, and the jagged outlines of the pillars were most singular, some here and there pinnacled and spiral, covered with festooned creepers, and others again severed in the centre, the upper portion widely separated from the base. The space was now filled with rope-makers, and the numbers of figures, men and children, who were engaged, and wearing the pretty dress of the Sicilian peasants, added much to the general effect. The guide mentioned that a large number of artists spent days in this prison, and generally differed very materially on the best points of view; this I could easily imagine, where all were so lovely. The roof of this prison was excessively damp, and in many places the stalactical process had already commenced, so that a few years will probably add much even to the present characteristic beauty of this remarkable spot. A second prison hall leads from the first, and on opening the door of communication, a most Salvator Rosa like effect presented itself. Columns of square stone supported the roof, broken and ruined in many parts; huge hills of earth were piled on the

floor, and the opening of the excavation looked over ruins and verdure, with a noble aqueduct in the distance; while in one corner blazed huge fires, beside which stood groups of mules and swarthy peasants assisting in removing huge caldrons from the furnaces. They were, we found, saltpetre-makers, a large quantity of which was procurable from the soil.

We wandered round from hence towards the back of the excavated apartments, and by a flight of narrow steps entered the small room known as the chamber of Dionysius. The mouth, guarded by a stone balcony, looks down on the gallery we had first entered, and a man stationed there kept up a whispered conversation with our cicerone that was heard distinctly, and it is said, that no sooner had the tyrant proved this fact than he caused every workman that had been employed on it to be put to death. The theatre is not far from this, where a good view is obtained of the strong town of modern Syracuse, the best for the purpose of the sketcher that can anywhere be found; and descending to the right, we came on the ancient road to Tycha, cut through solid

rock, and having on either side sepulchres, with inscribed slabs, and places of interment for rich and poor, it reminded me a little of the principal street of Pompeii, and is certainly as ancient and remarkable as any thing in Syracuse. Here and there are the marks of statues that have been removed, and remnants of marbles, probably used for inscriptions; the street is narrow, and the tops of the tombs richly decorated with verdure.

From this point we came round by the beautiful fountain of the nymph Arethusa, with the bright water falling through the moss-grown rocks into a sculptured basin surrounded with flowering creepers. A little farther on, the water rushed violently forth from between the clefted rock, and the bright sun shining on it, the refracted rays threw across the sparkling waters the most lovely mimic rainbow that could be imagined. At the fount two Sicilian girls stood with bare feet and snowy garments, filling their water-vessels; they were very fair, and as the sunlight fell on their young faces, a poet might have fancied them companions of the nymph, who, as the patroness of the ancient city, was long the theme of poetry and song.

Even to the common sense of travellers, it did not seem wonderful that so magnificent a gift of benevolent Nature as this is, should have been made a peg on which to hang a graceful legend; and to this day our guide told us, that the Syracusans believe that this is indeed the celebrated river of Greece, that as the form of her favourite and persecuted nymph, Diana caused to sink underground and transported to Sicily, to avoid the pressing attentions of poor Arethusa's lover, the too charming Alpheus, who, however, was too true a knight to be so dismissed, but followed his mistress all the way hither, and is clearly recognized in a fountain of fresh water that bubbles up in the sea not far from the fount of Arethusa, and which still is called "Alpheus." We could not find any of the remains of the magnificent Temple of Diana that the Greeks tell us was built near the fountain of the nymph, but the whole scene was so lovely that one was in no humour to sift authorities, and question the truth of all the graceful poetical fictions that thronged the memory, but, on the contrary, to yield them willing credence; and if our old guide had told me he had

really *seen* the golden cup, that, thrown in at the Olympic games to the stream of the Grecian river, had been cast up again at the fair fount of Sicily, I would rather have believed him than not have heard the legend in such a spot; for I love not to have the graceful and poetic stripped away, unless something equally pleasing, or more intelligent, takes its place.

As we returned again by the theatre, it excited our more particular attention, and we thought that Diodorus had reason when he said, that it was the most beautiful edifice of the kind in Sicily; and perhaps if Charles the Fifth had not taken so large a quantity of it for every-day uses elsewhere, it might long have remained the glory of Syracuse and the object of especial admiration to all who looked on it. But little now remains except the form of its semicircle and two of its corridors, and not the least interesting perhaps, the niches, which once held poles, where stretched the awning to protect the spectators from the noon-day heat.

As we passed, in coming back, the entrance to the Ear of Dionysius, we found our violinist seated on a rude bench cobbling shoes;

he was a Crispin by trade, but earned money by the fine as well as by the useful arts.

We passed the catacombs of San Giovanni without entering them, for I had been so wearied with investigations into the mummy-pits of Egypt, that burial-places of all kinds had lost their power of interest; so I satisfied myself with an apocryphal tomb of Archimedes, pointed out in a long row of others hewn in the rock. I call the tomb apocryphal, because its architecture and ornaments do not in any way agree with ancient descriptions of it, and I have learnt to be of little faith in the matter of relics and antiques.

From hence we proceeded about a mile and a half farther, and began to think that we had been hasty in dismissing the mule and horse, when we arrived at the Capuchin convent, and were welcomed by a brother of the order in the dress of his calling, who offered us wine and bread, or aught that the refectory could afford. We passed through the courts of the convent, which are crowded with orange trees, to the ancient Acradina, which we thought remarkably curious and beautiful. This garden is

some one hundred feet below the level of the soil, and was hewn out of a solid rock, petrified shells, and a variety of hard stony material; it is said to have been the quarry from whence were taken the building materials of Syracuse, and a portion of it being cut in a form similar to that of Dionysius's Ear, with steps leading to the summit. The Capuchins told me, that this had been originally a state prison for the Carthaginian and Athenian captives. However, from being originally a sterile quarry, time has made it a luxuriant garden, where grow the pomegranate and the orange in great perfection, surrounded by plants and flowers of every hue, the old prison clothed with ivy, and the stone carpeted with the richest verdure. The Capuchins are very proud of this spot, and with reason, for, beautiful in itself, it commands a very fine view of their convent, which looks down on it from the rock above.

The ground was literally covered with oranges, and we were for eating some after our walk, for antiquarian labours are always thirst-inspiring; but the Capuchin would not hear of it, so went his way and returned

with some dozen of the finest that could be seen from another part of the garden. Never certainly, either at Leghorn, Malta, or Naples, did I eat any so delicious in flavour; and this is a true opinion, for I reserved some, and tasted them when great thirst and fatigue were not present to aid their relish, yet were they equally good as in the Capuchin garden.

The brethren, who were very kind and civil, next proposed that we should visit the church of their convent, with the vaults containing their dead. The church is dedicated to Santa Maria de Pericle, and contains the usual number of waxen effigies, bouquets of paper flowers, and relics. But in the centre of the church we observed a flight of broad, handsome steps, and to these, with many significant looks and smiles, a couple of fat, comfortable-seeming Capuchins pointed. We descended, followed by some half-dozen of the brethren, and came on a scene the most remarkable I had ever witnessed, and to which a party of Egyptian mummies was mere bagatelle, as far as the horrible was concerned.

The vault was simply a long room well

lighted, and at one end of it an altar, with the usual decoration. Around this apartment, in separate niches in the wall, stood the skeletons of Capuchin monks, wearing the dress in which they died, with girdle, cross, rosary, and fleshless hands folded across the breast, as in the attitude of submission and prayer. The skulls of the monks appeared perfectly bare, except in one instance, where a few hairs were still apparent, as also on the chin. The individual likeness is strangely preserved, even in the absence of flesh and muscle, and the eyeless sockets which once beamed with the fire of energy and life, seem bent curiously on the stranger as he gazes,—an effect considerably increased by the position of the heads, which, loosened from the rope which holds them, incline forward towards the spectator.

It had a strange and startling effect to look from the living, talking, grinning Capuchins who surrounded us, to those of their brethren similarly arrayed, who in still silence, white, and inanimate, seemed glaring on us from the niches, with drooping jaws and unclosed eyes; and few spectacles

could be, I should think, more strange in their effects than the ceremony of the midnight mass, which on the 1st of November is annually performed here. On inquiry, I found that immediately after death the bodies of the Capuchins are placed in a sort of charnel-house, where, from the extreme dryness of the Sicilian atmosphere, the body in one month becomes completely dried, in which state it is placed in a niche of the vault. All that we saw had evidently lived the usual life of man, even to its time of feebleness and sorrow; and we heard that, notwithstanding the malarias of its marshes, Syracuse was often remarkable for the longevity of the inhabitants.

In front of the niches were piled rude, half-closed coffins, and a Capuchin beckoning me, I stood by while he opened the lids of some of them, and there, preserved after the same manner as the monks, were bodies of laymen, dressed in rich uniforms, with cocked hats and boots on, persons of importance, who had made bequests to the convent.

One would suppose that the moral effect intended by this display of man shorn of all his glory, was, by keeping death in view, to wean

his fellow from the vain pursuits of life; shewing him their utter worthlessness when once the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl broken. But we ponder little on that which is ever before us; and so the Capuchin, instead of walking a wiser and more thoughtful man among the dry bones which were once his fellow-monks, laughs them to scorn, points deridingly at their drooping jaws and viewless eye-holes, and, with threatening finger, bids them "take care, or they will fall."

They were simple-minded men, these Capuchins, knowing little beyond their own island, and not well versed in the history of that. One of them had travelled, however, and spoke French well. He made many inquiries concerning the convent and superior of Mount Carmel, and I was able to tell him somewhat of them, the latter having been our companion in quarantine at Malta. The Capuchin had intimately known Frère Jean Baptiste, the architect of Carmel, a remarkable man in his age and country, and told us somewhat of him. Frère Jean Baptiste, in the year 1819, commenced his labours for the restoration of the temple and hospice. Previous to this time, Abdalla Pasha com-

manded in Syria, and his strongest passion was that of hatred towards the Christians. This hatred was augmented by the revolt of the Greeks; the temple was destroyed on Carmel, and there, where hospitality once flourished, as at St. Bernard or Chartreuse, pilgrims were murdered by Bedouins, or devoured by wild beasts. The monk returned to Rome. In 1826, however, with great labour, he obtained permission from Sultan Mahmoud to rebuild the monastery, and again Frère Baptiste went forth, and seating himself on a rude block in the wild solitude of Carmel, he sketched his plans during the day, and at night begged a crust of bread from the house of a Druse for his refreshment. From a Turk he borrowed 9,000 francs to commence his work, and leaving the conclusion of it to a pupil, he travelled over the coasts of Asia Minor, and there, as in the Isles of the Archipelago and the streets of Constantinople, demanded alms "in the name of the Lord." As the result of the frère's energy and zeal, seven years only had elapsed after the total destruction of the monastery by Abdalla Pasha, when the first stone of the new convent was laid,

and a large sum expended on it; but yet, again, Jean Baptiste went forth into the neighbouring lands, collecting means for the completion of the hospice, and he has left it a noble and spacious edifice, giving shelter and food to all who need it, its monks receiving courteously every traveller who halts there, and the pilgrim who enters its gates. In goat's-hair cloak and shading cowl Frère Baptiste may still be seen in the streets of Paris, moving along with slow and dignified aspect, and eyes bent on the ground. Many who pass him lift their hats in reverence, and the monk courteously returns the recognition, but for his hopes and his reward he looks to Carmel.

Parting from the Capuchins, we returned to Syracuse, and on the way met large numbers of prisoners under military espionage working on the roads, and strings of young students in black gowns and tri-cornered hats, who seemed amazingly disposed to satirize the passers by.

The modern town of Syracuse, I really believe, has not one single recommendation, unless 'tis its small size, which enables one to be so soon out of it. It is narrow, dark,

extremely dirty, and as full of ill savours as Cologne. There are a vast number of cobblers residing there, and I believe they all live on oil and garlic. Now, though the olive-trees in the neighbourhood are of astonishing size and age, and are charming enough as portions of a landscape, and the oil, they say, produced by them is especially delicious, one may have too much of it, when in the dishes and on the fingers of all the Syracusans. The castor-oil shrub also adorns the suburbs of the town, and its broad glossy leaves veined with crimson fibres, and the bunches of large prickly berries waving in the bright sunlight, add considerably to their beauty. The museum is poor, but the cicerone insists on your seeing it, and points exultingly to a broken Venus from the Capuchin garden, with some slab inscriptions from the Way of Tombs; but a good appetite being the result of our morning's investigations, we passed over dozens of mutilated remnants and antique vases that we ought to have admired, and, what was worse than this, we absolutely slighted an ancient temple to Minerva, now the cathedral of Syracuse, and our discourse almost unconsciously turned on

fish, game, and wine, all of which the fair-faced Sicilian assured us were to be had in perfection at Syracuse; on which we quickened our pace, and arrived at the "Leone Dóro," just in time for the first course of the table-d'hôte.

But although the Golden Lion was present, the Golden Age was not, as far, at least, as corn and wine and oils were concerned, for the bread was stale and musty, the wine thick and sour, and the oil—yes, certainly there was oil, and that in abundance. The month, as I have said, was January, and snow lying thick on the high grounds. We had a brick-floor and no fire, cold plates, and a dirty table-cloth; pickles, olives, figs, and sliced mosaic-looking sausages at every corner; the kitchen a long way off, and small dishes of vegetable food swimming in oil, entering from time to time, after long intervals; so it will not require the judgment of a gastronomist to arrive at the conclusion of our dinner being a very uncomfortable one, or that, having seen the antiquities of Syracuse, we were not sorry to find ourselves again on board the *Ercolano*, on our way to fair Messina.

THE ALLIGATOR TANK; WITH PORTRAITS TAKEN ON THE INDUS.

In the year 1838, our object in treating with the Government of Sindh was said to be an interest in commerce; but such interests require the fostering power of peace, and hitherto Sindh has been but a military highway for the troops we have found it necessary to pour into the countries beyond it. Being now, however, a British possession, our interests about it will become true and active, and our countrymen will be anxious to learn the lineaments of a people and land with which so much is associated of British character and advantage.

It is well to "begin with the beginning," and therefore, in attempting to describe Sindh, I shall commence with Kurrachee, its port, which, for its importance and value,

may be considered as the Alexandria of the land.

It is about three years since my first introduction to Sindh, and never has any scene appeared to me so utterly desolate as Kurrachee did upon first landing, Its character is that of a sandy, sterile plain, diversified with a few rocks, and some thorny bushes; while the camp, situated two miles from the sea, is composed of small, comfortless, mud houses, that until sunset are obscured from each other by clouds of sand, which penetrate doors, windows, cooking vessels, and human attire. And yet, notwithstanding its uncomfortable houses, bad water, doubtful odours, permeating sands, capacity for cholera (which disease is scarcely ever absent), high winds, and glare, Kurrachee is a favourite spot, and lauded by many friends; the reason being, that society, which forms everywhere the charm of locality, is generally of a particularly agreeable kind there, and the minor miseries that the land inflicts induces sociability where etiquette is impossible.

To those accustomed to Indian life and its peculiar recreations, the chief objection to

Kurrachee is the bareness of the neighbourhood, and the difficulty of finding any spot as a suitable resort for people who delight in pic-nics, sport in the sun, or quiet in the shade. And here there is but one spot to which the weary campites may repair; yet, although solitary, it is remarkable, and therefore worthy description, as a lineament of Sindh.

It was in the beginning of last June that I paid my first visit to the Alligator Tank, and the month being one of the hottest in the year, we were in our saddles at daybreak, the distance being only seven miles, but a foot's pace rendered necessary, in consequence of the governor of the town having sent two wild, well-armed, uncouth Sindhian foot soldiers, to be at once our guides and our protection, for the hills around Kurrachee are peopled by Belooches, a class of worthies so full of hatred to Feringees, and of the love of appropriation generally, that they are far from agreeable in a lone and desert way; and the vision of such a warrior, with sword, shield, and matchlock, mounted on a small and bony tattoo, with heavy turban, and long waving locks, would be very apt to

interfere with the anticipated pleasure of a defenceless pic-nic hunter.

A Sindhian is a sociable creature, seldom understanding the meaning of haste, and never doing so on a journey. Every five minutes, therefore, our guides stopped to talk over village matters with friends on the way, and gossip being fatiguing, it became necessary to open a large bag slung across the shoulder of one, and take therefrom all the parts of a coco-nut kaliun, put them together, search for the tobacco in a smaller pouch, and then find a stone suited for striking a light on; when delay being caused, and the sun appearing over the eastern hills, we thought ourselves quite authorized in remonstrating, which caused Messieurs the soldiery to pack up their traps hastily, and shuffle on; but having no heels to their slippers, these shook off in the sand, and caused another halt, whereat, having passed the plain, and being so shut in by a defile of rocks, that to wander or lose the way was impossible, we told the Sindhians to fall back and follow us at leisure.

Black and desert looked the rocks, slippery to the horses' feet, and apparently extending

interminably to the great Hallah range which stretches away from Cape Monze, above Kurrachee, to the fortress of Khelat; but happily, appearances, seldom to be depended on, played here their usual part, and deceived us, but agreeably so in the present instance; for on emerging from the first defile, we saw the distant hills separated from us by a vast plain, and on it an oasis, bright with promise. Clustered together in rich luxuriance were noble clumps of tamarind and banian trees, streams of bright water sparkling under the sunbeams flowing about their roots, and above them all, the white dome of the mausoleum dedicated to Peer Mungar, the patron saint of the Alligator Tank. Under a beautiful tamarind-tree stood the tent and its apparatus; the white-robed domestics, who had watched our progress from far, were hurrying to and fro with the materials for a substantial breakfast; and the horses, who have more instinct in the East than elsewhere, simply because they are more educated by the companionship of man, testified such troublesome joy at the general *coup d'œil*, that we were constrained to give them the rein, and suffer

ourselves to be carried under boughs of trees and over watercourses, even as they would.

The principal portion of ground at the alligator tank is an irregular swamp, the higher banks covered with soft grass, and the whole sheltered by luxuriant foliage. A spring rises near it, and forms a calm still pool or bathing place. After breakfast we went down to the swamp, accompanied by one of the attendant guardians of the peer's mausoleum, and there a strange scene indeed presented itself. Lying about in the swamp appeared what seemed to us a vast number of trunks of trees, dark, dirty logs, among which on the crisp herbage fed two or three young bullocks, a Hindoo's donkey, and a Belooche's pony. Suddenly, however, the Moolah waved a long stick he had brought down with him, and uttered a strange sort of call: at the enchanter's wand every seeming block became suddenly endued with animation, and from below and around every little bank within the swamp, came slowly forth huge alligators, who, with their hideous rolling motion, and widely-opened, tongueless jaws, dragged their ponderous bodies from out the

slough in which they had been basking, and advanced towards the priest. But not alone were thus obedient the numerous alligators of the swamp; from beneath every tree surrounding it crawled forth one of these huge beasts, until, to my infinite disgust, I found myself the centre of a circle of alligators, all resting serpent-wise on their bodies, with eyes fixed on the master-spirit, and obedient to his commands. It was past their usual feeding time; but some joints of kid were thrown to them, which they devoured and scrambled for with horrible alacrity. Unlike the "suchus," or crocodile mentioned by Herodotus, whom he found with ear-rings, bracelets, temple, and priests, on the banks of the Nile, our alligators had neither fine bread nor sweet wine wherewith to finish their repast; but they seemed contented crocodiles these, and waved their claim on dessert when the first course was sufficiently abundant.

I did not feel particularly at my ease among the open jaws of our visitors; and as they still looked hungry, and the kid was exhausted, I begged the attendant to dismiss them with all courtesy: this he com-

plied with by waving his pole once more; and as he did so, all the alligator company turned slowly round, and waddling down the bank, soon recovered their original position in the swamp, again deceiving the eye with their wood-like appearance. The alligators who prefer shade and dry feet to wet and sunshine,—and these are commonly such as have the care and responsibility of a family,—resemble so perfectly the roots of the palm and banian trees under which they lie, that were it not that by a close inspection one may perceive a pair of eyes remarkable for smallness and expression, nothing could distinguish the motionless alligator from the trunk near which he lies; and by no chance does he move forth, except to receive his portion of kid, or during the hours of night, when the cool air induces to refreshing exercise.

In a small pool, surrounded by rock and vegetation, his body hidden in a cave, and holding himself aloof from all his kind, lies perdu, the mightiest of all the alligators of Peer Mungar; and on the general principle, I suppose, that common minds are always apt to yield respect to those who think

highly of themselves, so this sulky, conceited alligator is called "Moore Sahib," and given larger rations than all the rest. This self-elected commandant of the crocodile brigade is a petulant, ill-conditioned animal enough, and the people have a wholesome fear of him, which it would be as well, perhaps, if they had for the rest, although their friends assure one they are perfectly harmless. Generally, indeed, they appear so; but their patience is sometimes urged beyond alligator endurance, by the ingenious tormentings of the class called "Griffin," who visit the tank; and while I was at Kurrachee, a party of these young aspirants to military fame were compelled to take speedily to their saddles, to save themselves against the united attacks of the alligators, who, excited to revenge themselves on their disturbers, came valiantly forth to the attack, and followed their tormentors some distance from the tank, at a pace that constrained the gentlemen to a very undignified and speedy flight. The most dangerous feat ever performed here, was by a young midshipman in her Majesty's service, who, for a wager, ran through the alligator tank, at the time

crowded with these animals; he did so unhurt, making stepping-places of the beasts themselves. About a mile from the alligator tank is a warm spring, likewise surrounded by foliage, where one or two of the race are to be found; but it is a very inferior establishment to the one described.

The ancestors of the alligators of Peer Mungar were brought from a temple on the Indus, and a not very graceful legend is given of their origin; but the truth is that, like the Nile, the classic river of Sindh abounds with them; and as it is customary both with Mahomedans and Hindoos in the East to encourage tame creatures about the last resting-places of these holy men, near the Indus, they have selected the alligator, as in other localities they have done monkeys, fish, birds, and even rats, as in Cutch.

The alligator tank is a spot of very favourite resort to the native population of Kurrachee; and curiously enough, for I never could learn any reason for it, the people throughout Sindh always select Sunday as their especial holiday, although to the Mahomedans Friday affords them the leisure that the first day of the week does to us.

I have often ridden towards this spot to see the return groups; for they are always picturesque, and afford a very good idea of the native society of the place. The fat Hindoo, the more bulky the more respectable, with a huge turban, larger in dimensions than is ever to be seen elsewhere, well mounted, oily-looking, and well-conditioned, with gold bracelets, and a vast seal ring graven with Persian characters, and surrounded by chatting friends all worse dressed and worse mounted than himself, comes first, perhaps, and there is a jingling of bridles as he passes, a pleasantly musical and silvery sound, such as old Chaucer loved among the monks of old, speaking of wealth and ease. A little farther, and we have a relative of the Ameers, mounted on a high-bred mare, wearing the tall Sindhi cap of rich brocade, and surrounded by armed and truculent mercenaries on starved-looking, hollow-eyed ponies, with large saddle-bags and blue bead necklaces; and galloping past, at racing speed, on hard-mouthed hacks borrowed from the bakers of the bazaar, come half a dozen Portuguese cooks in fancy waistcoats, with

calico trowsers and jackets, abstracted from their masters' wardrobes. A camel follows with Sindhian women in kajavas; the ladies' bodices being particularly full of bits of looking-glass, and their ears of turquoise; a lock of glossy hair is parted from the braids which cross the forehead, and is tied to the nose ring; and as they pass, they smile brightly, and chatter, after the manner common to their sex, as men, who fancy they themselves never talk at all, sometimes say. And these, with a few stray foot-passengers, old women, and persons of no account, fill up the picture.

Altogether, the tomb of Peer Mungar is a popular spot, and they who bathe and drink water there, and those who eat curry and quaff pale ale, appear to like it equally.

The town of Kurrachee is a miserable place, the only manufacturers cap-makers, I believe; and so dirty are these productions before they are completed, that any one but a Sindhian would be a bold man to put one on his head, and a still braver person he who went to buy it for himself, inasmuch as round the town of Kurrachee, from tan

grounds and fishing-huts, there goeth up an aroma, to which the far-famed evil odours of Cologne would be as perfume.

There are good sands at Kurrachee, and people who like high winds, solitude, bad dinners, and sea-breezes, may have them there, living in tents upon the rocks, and amusing themselves by studying the natural history of the crab. Not far from this the Ghizree Creek connects the river Indus with the sea, running to within eight miles of the ancient and deserted town of Tatta, at which point of embarkation, when the river is at its height, the stream is not less than two miles wide, rushing on at the rate of five miles an hour; which rapid current, lashed by the violence of the winds, rouses the waters to the appearance of miniature waves, against whose power the flat-bottomed boats sometimes vainly struggle; while at others it is remarkable to observe the rate of their progression, assisted as they are by a thin, ragged sail, which the Sindhian navigators place *behind* the mast to prevent its parting company, or declining farther assistance to the objects of the expedition.

The boats on the Indus vary from seven

to fifty tons; they are strong and shallow, and ride low in the water. Steering is sometimes effected by means of a rudder of the common form, but more frequently, in the absence of a helm, the matter is managed by two ropes fastened one to either side at the base of the rudder, which the steersman guides.

The first time I took up my abode in one of these miserable boats, I looked round and about the rude craft in hopeless despair; but the servants, who certainly next to gypsies know how to make the best use of means and contrivances, soon rigged up a temporary cabin with old tent walls in the stern; and setting aside the perfumes of garlic, ghee, and onions, which rose from the arrangements of the cook, the puffs of green-wood smoke that entered at every crevice, and the heat of the sun at 96, no complaint could reasonably be made of our "*Beree.*" Luxurious persons from the Bengal presidency sometimes engage a second boat for the cook and his "properties;" comforts, however, similar to those of the Budjirow system on the Ganges are seldom sought on the Indus; and all persons acquainted with

both plans for voyaging would confess how "odious" the comparison would be between the two; while again, all men learned in Indian facts are well aware that the "Qui hies" are wont to travel attended by a pomp and circumstance, the poor "ducks" enjoy not even in their most splendid *dreams* of gorgeous Ind!

The boatman in whose craft I ascended the Indus was one of the most facetious, yet honest of his class. Conceit was the preponderating quality in his character, as a proof of which, after his first salaam, he used the following address:—"Do you know your *Nuseeb* (fate) is very great in having me for your boatman—there is not such another *Sipahi* (hero) on the river."

Butcha's favourite saint was Imaum Hossein, and this worthy it was his pleasure to invoke at intervals with great zeal, making it the chorus, as it were, to his animating addresses. Thus, if the crew became weary, and essayed to push the boat from a sandbank with less energy than Butcha required, he would rush to the bows, pole in hand, with his shaggy hair straggling beneath his greasy Sindhian cap, his eyes flashing, and

his white teeth shining from their dark cell, and with a stentorian voice animate them thus:—"*Shah Bash* (bravo), *Imaum Hossein!*" "*Ai Jurvan Murd* (oh, fine fellow), *Imaum Hossein! Khodah Pumah* (God protect you), *Imaum Hossein*," and so forth, in a string of similar nonsense.

Another caprice of my friend Butcha's was to affect to know every one he met, with something of the spirit that a measurer of ribbons experiences when, desiring to pass for a man of fashion, he lifts his seven-shilling gossamer to the fair occupants of a string of splendid equipages in Hyde Park. He desires it to be supposed that he is known, that he is "*somebody*," and so with my poor boatman. Not a man, woman, or child could pass along the river bank, or float down the stream on an earthen vessel, but found a salutation from old Butcha; but if the stranger put the simple question of "Who are you?" he would grow wroth, and vociferate in an angry voice, "May your father be burnt, and who are *you*, not to know the Sipahi of the river?" He was a character, Butcha, and therefore have I introduced him to the reader.

The Fakirs, whom the hand of Moslem superstition cherishes on the banks of the river Indus, would, to delineate, alone occupy a volume; individually, each religious beggar possesses peculiarities distinguishing him in a class, and each class has its own idiosyncrasies. Thus, there is the class of Fakir musical, the class blind, the weak, the sturdy, the aged, the young, the presuming, the dictatorial, the meek, the impertinent, and fifty others. There is also the class martial, armed with sword and shield, whom one may take for wandering and mischievous Belooches; a strange adoption for a religious mendicant, who surely, with a scripless wallet, should assume a virtue if he have it not, and in his outward seeming be at least a man of peace.

Immense numbers of these Fakirs are always to be found about Tatta, which stands between Kurrachee and Hyderabad: it is now a miserable place, ill supplied and unhealthy, but in old times had both wealth and importance,—a fact testified by the immense quantity of splendid mausoleums that remain all faced and adorned with blue Mosaic tiles, in pattern much resembling the old Saxon which have been found about

Windsor Castle, and other places of similar antiquity. These places are the great attractions to the Fakirs, who hover about them, as rats burrow among the ruins of the mansions of the great.

I was very much shocked at Tatta by a result of what the Ameers of Sindh consider a merciful dispensation of justice, in the form of a caged criminal, who for a case of murder has been incarcerated there for the last thirty years, until reason is fled, and madness usurped its place. The murderer was a Syud, an additional reason for his life being spared, but in general it is a rule of the Ameers never to punish capital offences with death. Nothing could be more foul and revolting than the appearance of this poor wretch, with his cowering form, long matted hair, twisted nails, and glaring eyes, emaciated and senseless, and we felt how far more merciful would it have been to have blown him from a gun, immediately after his crime, than to have kept him thus to become a maniac in the world that he had outraged.

The laws by which Sindh is governed are founded on the *Koran*, but abuse is so common, that it is difficult to know what they

are, or how they will be applied; and if the poor man seeks redress, either from a Syud, or from one of the Ameer's military retainers of any rank, he may be quite sure that the case will be given against him; while family feeling frequently shews itself in a form terrible indeed to those unaccustomed to the peculiarities of Mahomedan feeling. I have known a hapless girl fall by a brother's sword, and a robber cut to pieces by his father, lest his crimes should lead to the disgrace of the house.

Several drawings that have appeared of Hyderabad have afforded a tolerable and general idea of what it is, a large brick-built fort standing on a stony eminence near the river, and as desolate and uncomfortable-looking a place as can well be imagined. The Ameers had little notion of state, their Durbar being held in a poor white-washed sort of hall, crowded with Belooche mercenaries, and dirty Sindhian soldiery, while the corners were occupied by nâtch-girls, who, with their hands to their mouths, shriek forth Persian songs, in the vain hope of conquering all the din. The dress of the Ameers of Hyderabad did not by its richness add any thing to

the general effect, for it consists simply of a white cotton garment, with a Tatta scarf about the waist, and a Sindhian brocaded cap, the Belooche arms forming their principal ornament. All that the Ameers were wont to pride themselves on in Hyderabad was their artillery, kept in order by an Englishman, named Howell, *alias* "Said Khan," and bad enough it was.

The bazaar of Hyderabad is worthy remark, as it presents a curious grouping of most of the natives of the N.W.; there, for instance, may be seen the haughty Moslem, mounted on his strong Khorassan steed, decorated with rich trappings, appearing much as he would do elsewhere, but for the strange-looking Sindhi cap, and the striped gold and silk Moultaun scarf, which he has wound round an enormous waist, extended to the largest possible circumference by the liberal diet of a gallon of goat's milk daily, and sugar *à discretion*. Then we have the Affghan, with a dark blue cloth wound over his breast, his long matted hair falling in ringlets on his shoulders, his olive cheek tinted by the mountain breeze, and his eye beaming with fire and resolve; the Syud

of Pisheen, in his goat's-hair cloak; the fair Heratee; the merchant of Candahar, with loose and flowing garments and many-coloured turban; the tall Patan, with heavy sword and haughty swagger, looking as if he longed to court offence; and among the rest, the filthy Sindhian, with coarse garments and greasy cap, with the small, cringing, miserable-looking Hindoo, owning, perhaps, lacs, yet dreading the brow-beating of the Moslem. These present a fair sample of the whole, yet picturesque as the grouping is, we miss the desert Belooche, with his plaited hair, ponderous turban, sword, matchlock, and high-bred mare. But the free-booter of the plain loves not cities, and is seldom to be seen in them. It will easily be imagined, that while the shawl-merchant of Cashmere, the fruit-seller of Cabool, the carpet-maker of Herat, and the turquoise trader of Meshid, all jostle together on the broad principle of common interest, each varies in language, bearing, and costume. Thus, Persian, Pushtoo, Belooche, Sindhi, and Hindostanee, are all to be heard in turn, or, unhappily for the listener's ear, sometimes together; for good chapmanship requires lan-

guage, and in the East the gift is seldom exercised sparingly.

The great manufacture of Hyderabad is of small lackered boxes, that are both curious and pretty; two or three layers of different coloured woods—red, green, blue, and yellow—are laid one over the other in the manner of veneering, when with a small awl the pattern required is stamped through the several surfacings, whose varied colours produce the required design. The Sindhians are very fond of these boxes; they keep betel-nut, snuff, tobacco, and opium in them, and convert the larger ones into pen and paper cases. The latter must be always of good size, however, for much is required in the East before a letter can be sent. First there is the paper, always so ragged-edged that scissors are required to clip it; then ink and coarse reed pens, with a huge knife to carve them into form; next, red lead and gold leaf to sprinkle over the paper in honour of the receiver; then paper envelopes, to be secured with paste, before the Persian signet is attached; and to conclude, a brocade bag to be covered with one of muslin, secured at the mouth with cord and tassels.

The result of the Ameers' government of Sindh, which was a purely despotic one, has been impoverishment to the land, misery to the poor, favouritism and evil among the rich, with ignorance, fear, and oppression to all. The knowledge of art, the learning, the industry, which may in some degree have remained after the Moslem conquest of Sindh in the year of the Hejira 77, and the expulsion of the Hindoos from their rich and beautiful city of Alor, was by degrees utterly lost; the Hindoos who became converts to the creed of Islam, soon felt the oppression of Moslem rulers, and fled to other lands; while those who held firmly to their ancestral faith were driven to the mountains, to gain a precarious subsistence as they might, tending their flocks and plundering by turn. All, therefore, that is beautiful, and much of what is useful, is brought from far; and the court of Hyderabad was indebted to Persia, Khorassan, Benares, or the ports of the Sutledge, for all the fabrics and adornments which are prized so highly by these barbaric princes, who, to pay the foreign merchant for his goods, oppress the

native artisan, whose cunning has been lost by the exaction of Sindhian despots.

Sindh, we hope, will now be free from the cruel incubus that has so long oppressed it; although the personal courteousness and princely bearing of the Ameers induce a regret that they could not have been instructed to govern their own country on the rules of justice, instead of depriving them of the power they so long possessed. It would have been good, had it been deemed *politic*, to teach the barbarian lords of Sindh the mutual dependence of princes and their subjects; and that the oppression of a people never yet led to the wealth or true aggrandizement of kings.

THE EMPEROR'S GRAVE.

A SKETCH OF ST. HELENA.

To the homeward-bound, it is a cheering and a pleasant thing when the good ship, gallantly braving the terrors of the storm-girt Cape, rolls down with steady breeze to the lone and lovely island of St. Helena. The first glimpse of its shadowy outline gives to the wanderer's heart a feeling of home; a few weeks more, and the white cliffs of his fatherland will meet his eye; the burning heats of the tropic, the towering billows heaving round the bold crests of Table Mountain, the chilling dews of Afric's shores, are then all passed, and the tall rock, bristling with fortifications, and the gay ensigns floating from the masts of the crowded merchantmen, at once transport him (in imagination at least) to the longed-for havens of his native land.

We were fortunate enough to make the island of St. Helena soon after mid-day, early in the spring of the present year. At first the straining eye could catch but a mere speck, gloaming afar, like a fleecy cloud, on the horizon's edge, and then a tall and softly empurpled outline appearing more and more distinct, until here and there shone out bright patches of vegetation, signal-staves, and clustered cannon, until we came full upon the curious little nest of James' Town, and the anchor of our good ship dropped among the surrounding fleet. Dutch, French, and American flags, fluttered gaily around us with party-coloured brightness on the breeze; while a short distance apart, lay a little gloomy-looking brig, her yellow pennant giving us the certain indication that disease had been but too busy upon her decks.

After the annoyance of being "cribbed, cabined, and confined," during the period of a three months' voyage, less than the interest and beauty of St. Helena would have induced us all to sympathize in one general anxiety to find a more agreeable footing, than was afforded by teak planks and companion ladders; yet were we compelled to

await the advent of the garrison surgeon and his consequent report of our physical condition, that officer's harbour duties having become unusually responsible from the prevalence of the youth-afflicting measles, then raging with virulence both at the Cape, St. Helena, and Ascension. The long-expected Galen at length arrived, and by the same opportunity a crowd of Island traders, bearing baskets filled with Brobdingnagian pears, as hard as if they had been cut in marble; figs, ripe, rich, but apparently most grievously ill-treated; with loaves charged at six times their usual price, and little pats of butter rolled in cool plantain-leaves; all which refreshments found, among our passengers, ready purchasers, the sailors and the troops desperately engaging in a rivalry of rapid consumption; the gigantic pears alone seeming to defy the dental attacks of the most eager. None, however, but those long imprisoned upon the wide world of waters, can imagine the pleasure with which the fresh produce of the earth is relished by those to whom a bad potato has been long a luxury; it is like the tall palm-tree to the eye of the weary traveller, or the cool waters of the

shaded well in the parched and burning desert.

The landing at St. Helena is a matter of some difficulty, and requires experience in the boatmen; it being necessary to back the boats with considerable care and judgment over a heavy surf which breaks with violence on the shallow steps of the jettee, a little cove on its left being surrounded with low and irregularly-shaped rocks. The town of St. Helena is remarkable for its cleanliness, and, to a stranger arriving at it from India, the closed street doors, brass knockers, steps, and lamps, have an unusual and very comfortably European look. The principal street occupies a narrow valley, on either side of which the rock rises with almost perpendicular steepness. In the rainy season of May and June, accidents frequently occur by the detachment of portions of the rock; and during the few days only I remained upon the island, several masses descended with dangerous violence among the houses of the town. On the first occasion, a block of considerable magnitude fell on the roof of a cottage and thence to the bed beneath it, literally crushing to pieces a poor woman

then sleeping in it, and also seriously injuring several other members of the family, employed in the little garden which surrounded the humble and devoted dwelling.

The botanical gardens of James' Town are well laid out, and contain some very fine specimens of cactus, euphorbia, and aloes, with particularly choice lilacs and lilies, for which St. Helena is justly famed. Wherever soil is to be found, vegetation is abundant; and the gardens of the island produce fine vegetables of various descriptions, with tolerably good fruit,—pears, peaches, figs, grapes, the Chinese loquat, plantains, apples, &c. The mutton is also excellent; the merino sheep finding abundant forage in the sweet herbs and grasses, to be found in the glens and gorges of the neighbouring hills. To this wholesome food may in some degree be ascribed the particular healthiness of the European troops, whose countenances possess a tint of health, quite refreshing to an eye accustomed to the sallow or pallid hues so generally observable among European soldiery in the East. As an article of food, the fish is also excellent, and to be obtained in large quantities, more particularly of the

mackarel kind, together with flat fish of good flavour, but rather coarse quality, known upon the island as "*old wives.*"

The revenue of St. Helena is said to be about £10,000 a year, derived principally from its custom dues. The trade is inconsiderable, inasmuch as vessels usually take in stock at the Cape and merely touch at St. Helena for water. In 1838, seven hundred vessels entered the harbour, but probably few among that number required supplies. Every necessary of life is exorbitantly dear, and the trades-people of James' Town have Americanisms of manner, whose independence is seldom agreeable to the stranger.

The principal hotel at St. Helena is kept by Saul Solomon, a Jew, who extorts thirty shillings a day for the advantages his house affords, and who is connected with the trading interests of the whole community.

The history of Saul Solomon is rather curious, and the gifts he has received at the hands of Fortune are so unusual, that I should have doubted the authority of the facts had I not been assured of them on the information of a friend well acquainted with the career of the individual in question.

The important Saul Solomon appears to have been, in early life, a soldier stationed upon the island of St. Helena; and being employed on some occasion as one among a fatigue party engaged in mending roads, he leaned carelessly against a portion of the rock, and in an idle and half-meditative mood kicked aside the fragments which lay immediately around him. Engaged in this harmless entertainment, his eye was attracted by the strange phenomenon of a small canvass bag, exposed by the removal of a concealing block. The soldier started, gazed steadfastly at what, it would seem, nothing less than the wondrous lamp could have conjured to this spot, lifted it from its position, and on investigation found it to contain an abundant number of broad gold pieces. Solomon considering nothing of the law concerning treasure-trove, as expounded by the learned Blackstone, with honest and good intention bore his newly-discovered prize to the presence of the governor, who caused it to be advertised, with the proviso that, should its owner not appear, the treasure should be awarded to Saul Solomon, whose lack of engineering zeal had caused it to

be discovered. Time passed, and as none claimed the golden prize, Solomon possessing it, speculated and prospered: he is now foreign consul on the island, and a man of great and unrivalled importance; his sons are the principal shopkeepers of the town, and four wives have successively shared his affection and his wealth. As a hotel-keeper his charges are unreasonable; yet I have heard some redeeming traits of very un-Israelitish generosity in the conduct of Solomon towards persons ill prepared to endure extortion.

A drive of three miles from James' Town around the brows of the neighbouring hills, and then a slight descent, brings the visitor to the entrance of the gem of St. Helena, Napoleon's tomb. True, Solomon's horses have a heavy pull, but they seem accustomed to their work, and the thirty shillings required by their master for their hire, remunerates *him* at least, for the labour they endure. The road is narrow, circuitous, and in some portions extremely rugged, but the scenery is wildly romantic, and in many parts of the island exquisitely beautiful; grandeur, however, constitutes its principal

feature. Every new turn presents a combination of strange and fantastic forms, and masses of stupendous rock, cleft as it were by giant force, crowned with fir woods, or gay with the scarlet blossoms of the bright geranium. Here and there are scattered pretty cottages, inhabited, many by men of science, loving a retirement where nature affords so many rare and interesting subjects of inquiry; while the little gardens and shrubberies in which they are nestled, afford pleasant resting-places for the eye when half wearied with the wild sublimity of this rocky fastness. The peculiarity of the geological formations, the varieties of the soil, and the brilliance of the coloured clays of St. Helena, also add much to the beauty of its scenery, while from every point may be seen the shining waters of the surrounding ocean, with the noble ships anchoring in safety near its shores.

The tomb of the royal prisoner has been frequently described, but the philosophy of this lovely spot (if the idea may be allowed me) can be acquired only by personal visit. Its situation is exquisitely beautiful, and unlike, in its sequestered stillness, any other

portion of this picturesque island. When the agony of perturbed feelings pressed too heavily upon the exiled Emperor's heart, he was wont to retire among the cypress shades of this quiet dell, and, with his eagle eye fixed upon the world of waters, endeavour to regain his mental equilibrium. The long grass waves in rank luxuriance around the grave where long reposed the body of Napolean; and a hedge of gay geraniums shades the cool spring, from which the Emperor is said to have loved to drink, after his varying walk over the exposed and sunny paths which separated him from Longwood. 'Tis a lovely spot, and the very breeze seems to visit it with gentleness. Green slopes are gathered round it, and the sunbeams fall with flickering dimness through the shade of the cypress boughs which bend towards the dell; while every tree, and branch, and flower, every undulating variation of the verdure-clad earth, every graceful fibre of the bending willows, afford fresh combinations for rich and beautiful effects. The philosopher might, at that simple grave, lay up a store of wisdom for himself, and the poet would feel a chord of

enthusiasm awakened, inspiring him with many bright and gentle thoughts. Yet none among them all, even the greatest patriot who glories in the supremacy of England's power, could stand by that simple slab without experiencing an emotion of saddening sympathy, which, however his political opinions may condemn him, will exert its softening influence, even among other and far distant scenes.

At the head of the tomb, a small geranium still lives, originally planted by the hand of Madame Bertrand; but its leaves look withered and sapless, and the buds fall ere they gain vigour to swell into a maturity of bloom. An old sergeant in charge of the tomb acts as cicerone to visitors, and, with the garrulity of age, employed on a favourite and familiar subject, he loves to dwell on the peculiarities of the Emperor's habits and appearance, a theme which commonly finds ready and interested auditors.

On leaving the inclosure which surrounds the tomb, a sad bathos is produced by the presentation of a card, soliciting visitors to partake of some refreshment prepared in the cottage of a poor widow in the neighbour-

hood; the suggestion is in bad taste, and not frequently, I believe, adopted.

The habit of requesting the inscription of the visitor's name, in a book kept for that purpose, is a pleasant rule; 'tis a cheering thing to note the name of a well-remembered friend who, like ourselves, has braved the dangers of the long and weary voyage, and whose feelings, in common with our own, have been interested and awakened by the scene around us.

From thence we proceeded to Longwood, an exposed and sunny drive. The stranger who visits St. Helena must be ever surprised at the extraordinary variations in the temperature of the island, the elevated portions being cold and bleak in the extreme, and the valleys unusually sultry and oppressive,—an effect produced by the character of the rock, and its remarkable reflection. On the high grounds, showers are very constant and very partial, and the distance of half a mile causes the important difference in sensation between a degree of uncomfortable coldness, and a heat which blisters and inflames the skin. The old residence of Napoleon at Longwood is now a

farm; the room in which the body of the ex-Emperor was laid in state is occupied by a machine for grinding corn; while the apartment in which he died is converted into a stable. The walls are covered with the inscribed names of visitors to the spot, and in one portion of the building some lines remain, which, whether original or not, are at least apposite, and the idea conveyed by them novel and ingenious:—

"When Napoleon sought Death, arm'd with his spear and shield,
Death was afraid to meet him in the field;
But when his spear and shield he laid aside,
Death, like a coward, struck him, and he died."

The site of the new house at Longwood was selected by the Emperor from the extreme and extensive beauty of the surrounding scenery; he, however, did not live to see its completion, and it is singular that, in assisting in the arrangement of the shrubbery, he should himself have planted an oak sapling there, which now shadows the window of the library. The rooms are unfurnished, but the fixture decorations are elegant and costly, more particularly the painted draperies of the chapel, drawing-room, and library.

A few days before Napoleon's death, he

caused his bath to be removed to the new house, where it still remains, but the furniture was sold, and much of it is still preserved in James' Town. The dining-tables, lamps, &c. are in the possession of the officers of the 91st Regiment stationed on the island, as also the Emperor's chess-board, the most interesting relic, perhaps, of the whole,—a minor field of Waterloo, on which the foiled tactician fought and re-fought the ground of his hoped-for conquests. A Mr. Gideon, a shopkeeper in the town, states himself to have been in the constant habit of playing with Napoleon, who cared little for the rank of his antagonist, if his tactics as a chess-player were but sound and ingenious. This same Gideon possesses a very admirable portrait of the Emperor, presented to him by Madame Bertrand; a copy from an original of David.

Gideon and Solomon, Jun., are the great shopkeepers of St. Helena; they each possess a store of Chinese articles of *vertù*, charged at a most unreasonable and exorbitant rate. Fans, carved ivory, inlaid Mosaic, and feather screens, being charged at a price fifty per cent. higher than in Bombay, where the

Parsee traders are far from scrupulous in their valuation of such articles.

Upon inquiry, I was surprised and disappointed that collections of geological specimens were unprocurable on the island, the country abounding with so much of an interesting and curious nature; at the back of the island, more particularly in a spot called "Sandy Bank Bay," remarkable for its singular and picturesque scenery, many varieties of the red and ribbon jasper are found, with varieties of a shell supposed to be the "Murix Pomum," from which the ancients procured their finest Tyrian dyes.

There is little worthy the stranger's inquiry in James' Town, and as a military station it has indeed nothing to recommend it. All European intelligence is received *viâ* the Cape of Good Hope, with many of the most necessary supplies of life. A St. Helena almanack is published, which contains a great deal of useful statistical information; but great paucity prevails in the literary supplies of James' Town, and its inhabitants are unusually cast upon their own resources. The society of St. Helena is a singularly constituted one; it is composed but of two

classes, the military *employés* and the trading residents. Local circumstances cause what would seem a unique admixture of the two, and the usually exclusive military *clique* lose at St. Helena this generally remarked characteristic of their order, and associate with, and receive at their mess table, persons who under different circumstances would be excluded by the character of their vocations. The enormous price of provisions does not permit much hospitality to be shewn to visitors by the residents on the island; but in the circle of military society, a cordiality and *bonhomie* of manner obtains, which as the good ship springs on her homeward way, and the tall rock fades in shaded indistinctness, induces the visitor even of a day, to feel, that in other and more genial lands he would hail with joy the kindly voices and pleasant faces he has left at St. Helena.

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